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THE

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

FROM

**THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TO THE ABOLITION OF
PAGANISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.**

By HENRY HART MILMAN, D.D.,

DEAN OF ST PAUL'S.

THREE VOLUMES IN TWO.

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THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TO THE ABOLITION OF
PAGANISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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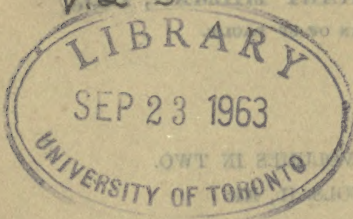
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HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

BOOK II.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER IV.

Christianity to the Close of the First Century — Constitution of Christian Churches.

THE changes in the moral are usually wrought as imperceptibly as those in the physical world. Had any wise man, either convinced of the divine origin of Christianity, or even contemplating with philosophical sagacity the essential nature of the new religion and the existing state of the human mind, ventured to predict that from the ashes of these obscure men would arise a moral sovereignty more extensive and lasting than that of the Cæsars; that buildings more splendid than any which adorned the new marble city, now rising from the ruins of the conflagration, would be dedicated to their names, and maintain their reverence for an incalculably longer period,—such vaticinations would have met the fate inseparable from the wisdom which outstrips its age, would have been scorned by contemporary pride, and only admired, after their accomplishment, by late posterity. The slight and contemptuous notice excited by Christianity during the first century of its pro-

mulgation is in strict accordance with this ordinary development of the great and lasting revolutions in human affairs. The moral world has sometimes, indeed, its volcanic explosions, which suddenly and violently convulse and reform the order of things ; but its more enduring changes are in general produced by the slow and silent workings of opinions, remotely prepared and gradually expanding to their mature and irresistible influence. In default, therefore, of real information as to the secret but simultaneous progress of Christianity in so many quarters, and among all ranks, we are left to speculate on the influence of the passing events of the time, and of the changes in the public mind, whether favorable or prejudicial to the cause of Christianity, catching only faint and uncertain gleams of its peculiar history through the confused and rapidly changing course of public affairs.

The imperial history, from the first promulgation of Christianity down to the accession of Constantine, divides itself into four distinct but unequal periods. More than thirty years are occupied by the line of the first Cæsars, rather less by the conflicts which followed the death of Nero, and the government of the Flavian dynasty. The first years of Trajan, who ascended the imperial throne A.D. 98, nearly synchronize with the opening of the second century of Christianity ; and that splendid period of internal peace and advancing civilization, of wealth, and of prosperity, which has been described as the happiest in the annals of mankind, extends over the first eighty years of that century.¹ Down to

Imperial
history
divided
into four
periods.

¹ Among the writers who have discussed this question may be consulted Hegewisch, whose work has been translated by M. Solvet, under the title of *Essai sur l'Epoque de l'Histoire Romaine la plus heureuse pour le Genre Humain*. Paris, 1834.

the accession of Constantine, nearly at the commencement of the fourth century, the empire became, like the great monarchies of the East, the prize of successful ambition and enterprise: almost every change of ruler is a change of dynasty; and already the borders of the empire have ceased to be respected by the menacing, the conquering Barbarians.

It is remarkable how singularly the political character of each period was calculated to advance the growth of Christianity.

First period,
to the death
of Nero.

During the first of these periods, the Government, though it still held in respect the old republican institutions, was, if not in form, in its administration purely despotic. The state centred in the person of the emperor. This kind of hereditary autocracy is essentially selfish; it is content with averting or punishing plots against the person, or detecting and crushing conspiracies against the power, of the existing monarch. To those more remote or secret changes which are working in the depths of society, eventually perhaps threatening the existence of the monarchy or the stability of all the social relations, it is blind or indifferent.¹ It has neither sagacity to discern, intelligence to comprehend, nor even the disinterested zeal for the perpetuation of its own despotism, to counteract such distant and contingent dangers. Of all innovations, it is, in general, sensitively jealous; but they must be palpable and manifest, and directly clashing with the passions or exciting the fears of the sovereign. Even these are met by temporary measures. When an outcry was raised against the Egyptian reli-

¹ "Sævi proximis ingruunt." In this one pregnant sentence of Tacitus is explained the political secret, that the mass of the people have sometimes been comparatively unoppressed under the most sanguinary tyranny

gion as dangerous to public morality, an edict commanded the expulsion of its votaries from the city. When the superstition of the emperor shuddered at the predictions of the mathematicians, the whole fraternity fell under the same interdict. When the public peace was disturbed by the dissensions among the Jewish population of Rome, the summary sentence of Claudius visited both Jews and Christians with the same indifferent severity. So the Neronian persecution was an accident arising out of the fire at Rome, no part of a systematic political plan for the suppression of foreign religions. It might have fallen on any other sect or body of men who might have been designated as victims to appease the popular resentment. The provincial administrations would be actuated by the same principles as the central government, and be alike indifferent to the quiet progress of opinions, however dangerous to the existing order of things. Unless some breach of the public peace demanded their interference, they would rarely put forth their power; and, content with the maintenance of order, the regular collection of the revenue, the more rapacious with the punctual payment of their own exactions, the more enlightened with the improvement and embellishment of the cities under their charge, they would look on the rise and propagation of a new religion with no more concern than that of a new philosophic sect, particularly in the eastern part of the empire, where the religions were in general more foreign to the character of the Greek or Roman Polytheism. The popular feeling, during this first period, would only under peculiar circumstances outstrip the activity of the Government. Accustomed to the separate worship of the Jews, to the many Christianity appeared at

first only as a modification of that belief. Local jealousies or personal animosities might in different places excite a more active hostility. In Rome it is evident that the people were only worked up to find inhuman delight in the sufferings of the Christians, by the misrepresentations of the Government, by superstitious solicitude to find some victims to appease the angry gods, and that strange consolation of human misery, the delight of wreaking vengeance on whomsoever it can possibly implicate as the cause of the calamity.

During the whole, then, of this first period, to the death of Nero, both the primitive obscurity of Christianity, and the transient importance it assumed, as a dangerous enemy of the people of Rome, and subsequently as the guiltless victim of popular vengeance, would tend to its eventual progress. Its own innate activity, with all the force which it carried with it, both in its internal and external impulse, would propagate it extensively in the inferior and middle classes of society; while, though the great mass of the higher orders would still remain unacquainted with its real nature, and with its relation to its parent Judaism, it was quite enough before the public attention to awaken the curiosity of the more inquiring, and to excite the interest of those who were seriously concerned in the moral advancement of mankind. In many quarters, it is far from impossible that the strong revulsion of the public mind against Nero, after his death, may have extended some commiseration towards his innocent victims:¹ that the Christians were acquitted by the popular feeling of any real connection

¹ This was the case even in Rome. "Unde quanquam adversus fontes et novissima exempla meritos, miseratio oriebatur, tanquam non utilitate publicâ, sed in sævitiam unius absumerentur." — Tac., Ann. xv. 44.

with the fire at Rome, appears evident from Tacitus, who retreats into vague expressions of general scorn and animosity.¹ At all events, the persecution must have had the effect of raising the importance of Christianity, so as to force it upon the notice of many who might otherwise have been ignorant of its existence. The new and peculiar fortitude with which the sufferers endured their unprecedented trials would strongly recommend it to those who were dissatisfied with the moral power of their old religion; while, on the other hand, it was yet too feeble and obscure to provoke a systematic plan for its suppression.

During the second period of the first century, from A.D. 68 to 98, the date of the accession of Trajan, the larger portion was occupied by the reign of Domitian, a tyrant in whom the successors of Augustus might appear to revive, both in the monstrous vices of his personal character and of his government. Of the Flavian dynasty, the father alone, Vespasian, from the comprehensive vigor of his mind, perhaps from his knowledge of the Jewish character and religion, obtained during his residence in the East, was likely to estimate the bearings and future prospects of Christianity. But the total subjugation of Judæa, and the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, having reduced the religious parents of the Christians to so low a state,—their nation, and consequently their religion, being, according to the ordinary course of events, likely to mingle up with and become absorbed in the general population of the Roman empire,—Christianity, it might reasonably be supposed, would scarcely survive its original stock, and might be safely left to burn out by the same grad-

Second
period, to
the accession
of Trajan.

¹ "Odio humani generis convicti."

ual process of extinction. Besides this, the strong mind of Vespasian was fully occupied by the restoration of order in the capital and in the provinces, and in fixing on a firm basis the yet-unsettled authority of the Flavian dynasty. A more formidable, because more immediate, danger threatened the existing order of things. The awful genius of Roman liberty had entered into an alliance with the higher philosophy of the time. Republican stoicism, brooding in the noblest minds of Rome, looked back, with Stoic philosophers. vain though passionate regret, to the free institutions of their ancestors, and demanded the old liberty of action. It was this dangerous movement—not the new and humble religion, which calmly acquiesced in all political changes, and contented itself with liberty of thought and opinion—that put to the test the prudence and moderation of the Emperor Vespasian. It was the spirit of Cato, not of Christ, which he found it necessary to control. The enemy before whom he trembled was the patriot Thrasea, not the apostle St. John, who was silently winning over Ephesus to the new faith. The edict of expulsion from Rome fell not on the worshippers of foreign religions, but on the philosophers; a comprehensive term, but which was probably limited to those whose opinions were considered dangerous to the imperial authority.¹

It was only with the new fiscal regulations of the rapacious and parsimonious Vespasian that the Christians were accidentally implicated. The emperor continued to levy the capitation tax, which had been willingly and proudly paid by the Jews throughout the empire for the maintenance of their own Temple at

¹ Tacit., Hist. iv. 4-9. Dion Cassius, lxvi. 13. Suetonius. Vespas. 15. Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs: Vespasian. Art. 15.

Jerusalem, for the restoration of the idolatrous fane of the Capitoline Jupiter, which had been destroyed in the civil contests. The Jew submitted with Temple tax. sullen reluctance to this insulting exaction; but even the hope of escaping it would not incline him to disguise or dissemble his faith. But the Judaizing Christian, and even the Christian of Jewish descent, who had entirely thrown off his religion, yet was marked by the indelible sign of his race, was placed in a singularly perplexing position.¹ The rapacious publican, who farmed the tax, was not likely to draw any true distinction among those whose features, connections, names, and notorious descent, still designated them as liable to the tax: his coarser mind would consider the profession of Christianity as a subterfuge to escape a vexatious impost. But to the Jewish Christian of St. Paul's opinions, the unresisted payment of the burthen, however insignificant, and to which he was not bound, either by the letter or the spirit of the edict, was an acknowledgment of his unconverted Judaism, of his being still under the Law, as well as an indirect contribution to the maintenance of Heathenism. It is difficult to suppose that those who were brought before the public tribunal, as claiming an exemption from the tax, and exposed to the most indecent examination of their Jewish descent, were any other than this class of Judaizing Christians.

In other respects, the connection of the Christians with the Jews could not but affect their place in that indiscriminating public estimation which still, in general, notwithstanding the Neronian persecution, con-

¹ Dion Cassius, edit. Reimar, with his notes, lib. lxvi. p. 1082. Suetonius in Dom. v. 12. Martial, vii. 14. Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, vol. vii. ch. xi. p. 304.

founded them together. The Jewish war appears to have made a great alteration both in the condition of the race of Israel, and in the popular sentiment towards them. From aversion, as a sullen and unsocial, they were now looked upon with hatred and contempt, as a fierce, a desperate, and an enslaved race. Some of the higher orders, Agrippa and Josephus the historian, maintained a respectable, and even an eminent, rank at Rome; but the provinces were overrun by swarms of Jewish slaves or miserable fugitives, reduced by necessity to the meanest occupations, and lowering their minds to their sordid and beggarly condition.¹ As, then, to some of the Romans the Christian assertion of religious freedom would seem closely allied with the Jewish attempt to obtain civil independence, they might appear, especially to those in authority, to have inherited the intractable and insubordinate spirit of their religious forefathers; so, on the other hand, in some places, the Christian might be dragged down, in the popular apprehension, to the level of the fallen and outcast Jew. Thus, while Christianity in fact was becoming more and more alienated from Judaism, and even assuming the most hostile position, the Roman rulers would be the last to discern the widening breach, or to discriminate between that religious confederacy which was destined to absorb within it all the subjects of the Roman empire, and that race which was to remain, in its social isolation, neither blended into the general mass of mankind, nor admitting any other within its insuperable pale. If the singular story related by Hegesippus² concerning the family of our Lord deserves credit, even the de-

Change in the
condition and
estimation
of the Jews
after the war.

The descend
ants of the
brethren of
our Lord
brought
before the
tribunal.

¹ Compare Hist. of the Jews, ii. 454

² Eusebius iii. 20.

scendants of his house were endangered by their yet-unbroken connection with the Jewish race. Domitian is said to have issued an edict for the extermination of the whole house of David, in order to annihilate for ever the hope of the Messiah, which still brooded with dangerous excitement in the Jewish mind. The grandsons of St. Jude, "the brother of the Lord," were denounced by certain heretics as belonging to the proscribed family, and brought before the tribunal of the emperor, or, more probably, that of the Procurator of Judæa.¹ They acknowledged their descent from the royal race, and their relationship to the Messiah; but in Christian language they asserted that the kingdom which they expected was purely spiritual and angelic, and only to commence at the end of the world, after the return to judgment. Their poverty, rather than their renunciation of all temporal views, was their security. They were peasants, whose hands were hardened with toil, and whose whole property was a farm of about twenty-four English acres, and of the value of nine thousand drachms, or about three hundred pounds sterling. This they cultivated by their own labor, and regularly paid the appointed tribute. They were released as too humble and too harmless to be dangerous to the Roman authority; and Domitian, according to the singularly inconsistent account, proceeded to annul his edict of persecution against the Christians.

Like all the stories which rest on the sole authority of Hegesippus, this has a very fabulous air. At no period were the hopes of the Messiah entertained by the Jews so little likely to awaken the jealousy of the

¹ Gibbon thus modifies the story, to which he appears to give some credit.

emperor as in the reign of Domitian. The Jewish mind was still stunned, as it were, by the recent blow : the whole land was in a state of iron subjection. Nor was it till the latter part of the reign of Trajan, and that of Hadrian, that they rallied for their last desperate and conclusive struggle for independence. Nor, however indistinct the line of demarcation between the Jews and the Christians, is it easy to trace the connection between the stern precaution for the preservation of the peace of the Eastern world and the stability of the empire against any enthusiastic aspirant after an universal sovereignty, with what is sometimes called the second great persecution of Christianity ; for the exterminating edict was aimed at a single family, and at the extinction of a purely Jewish tenet, though it may be admitted, that, even yet, the immediate return of the Messiah to reign on earth was dominant among most of the Jewish Christians of Palestine. Even if true, this edict was rather the hasty and violent expedient of an arbitrary sovereign, trembling for his personal security, and watchful to avert danger from his throne, than a profound and vigorous policy, which aimed at the suppression of a new religion, declaredly hostile, and threatening the existence of the established Polytheism.

Christianity, however, appears to have forced itself upon the knowledge and the fears of Domitian in a more unexpected quarter,—the bosom of his own family.¹ Of his two cousins-german, the sons of Flavius Sabinus, the one fell an early victim to his jealous apprehensions. The other, Flavius Clemens, is described by the epigrammatic Flavius
Clemens. biographer of the Cæsars as a man of the most con-

¹ Suetonius, in Domit. c. 15. Dion Cassius, lxxvii. 14. Eusebius, iii. 18.

temptible indolence of character. His peaceful kinsman, instead of exciting the fears, enjoyed for some time the favor, of Domitian. He received in marriage Domitilla, the niece of the emperor; his children were adopted as heirs to the throne; Clemens himself obtained the consulship. On a sudden, these harmless kinsmen became dangerous conspirators; they were arraigned on the unprecedented charge of Atheism and Jewish manners; the husband, Clemens, was put to death; the wife, Domitilla, banished to the desert island, either of Pontia or Pandataria. The crime of Atheism was afterwards the common popular charge against the Christians,—the charge to which, in all ages, those are exposed who are superior to the vulgar notion of the Deity. But it was a charge never advanced against Judaism: coupled, therefore, with that of Jewish manners, it is unintelligible, unless it refers to Christianity. Nor is it improbable that the contemptible want of energy, ascribed by Suetonius to Flavius Clemens, might be that unambitious superiority to the world which characterized the early Christians. Clemens had seen his brother cut off by the sudden and capricious fears of the tyrant; and his repugnance to enter on the same dangerous public career, in pursuit of honors which he despised, if it had assumed the lofty language of philosophy, might have commanded the admiration of his contemporaries, but, connected with a new religion, of which the sublimer notions and principles were altogether incomprehensible, only exposed him to their more contemptuous scorn. Neither in his case was it the peril apprehended from the progress of the religion, but the dangerous position of the individuals professing the religion, so near to the throne, which was fatal to Clemens and

Domitilla. It was the pretext, not the cause, of their punishment; and the first act of the reign of Nerva was the reversal of these sentences by the authority of the senate. The exiles were recalled; and an act, prohibiting all accusations of Jewish manners,¹ seems to have been intended as a peace-offering for the execution of Clemens, and for the especial protection of the Christians.

But Christian history cannot pass over another incident assigned to the reign of Domitian, since it relates to the death of St. John the apostle. Christian gratitude and reverence soon began to be discontented with the silence of the authentic writings as to the fate of the twelve chosen companions of Christ. It began first with some modest respect for truth, but soon, with bold defiance of probability, to brighten their obscure course, till each might be traced by the blaze of miracle into remote regions of the world, where it is clear, that, if they had penetrated, no record of their existence was likely to survive.² These religious invaders, according to the later Christian romance, made a regular partition of the world, and assigned to each the conquest of his particular province. Thrace, Scythia, Spain, Britain, Ethiopia, the extreme parts of Africa, India, the name of which mysterious region was sometimes assigned to the southern coast of Arabia, had each its apostle, whose spiritual triumphs and cruel martyrdom were vividly portrayed and gradually amplified by the fertile invention of the Greek and Syrian historians of the early Church. Even the history of St. John,

Legends of the missions of the apostles into different countries.

Death of St. John

¹ Dion Cassius, lxxviii. 1.

² Euseb., Ecc. Hist. iii. 1. The tradition is here in its simpler and clearly more genuine form.

whose later days were chiefly passed in the populous and commercial city of Ephesus, has not escaped. Yet legend has delighted in harmonizing its tone with the character of the beloved disciple drawn in the Gospel, and illustrated in his own writings. Even if purely imaginary, these stories show that another spirit was working in the mind of man. While, then, we would reject, as the offspring of a more angry and controversial age, the story of his flying in fear and indignation from a bath polluted by the presence of the heretic Cerinthus, we might admit the pleasing tradition, that, when he grew so feeble from age as to be unable to utter any long discourse, his last, if we may borrow the expression, his cyanean voice dwelt on a brief exhortation to mutual charity.¹ His whole sermon consisted in these words, "Little children, love one another;" and, when his audience remonstrated at the wearisome iteration of the same words, he declared that in these words was contained the whole substance of Christianity. The deportation of the apostle to the wild island of Patmos, where general tradition places his writing the Book of Revelations, is by no means improbable, if we suppose it to have taken place under the authority of the Proconsul of Asia, on account of some local disturbance in Ephesus, and, notwithstanding the authority of Tertullian, reject the trial before Domitian at Rome, and the plunging him into a cauldron of boiling oil, from which he came forth unhurt.² Such are the few vestiges of the progress of Christianity, which we dimly

¹ Euseb., *Ecc. Hist.* iii. 22.

² "Ubi (in Româ) apostolus Johannes, postea quam in oleum igneum demersus, nihil passus est." Mosheim suspects, that, in this passage of Tertullian, a metaphor has been converted into a fact.—*De Reb. Christ. ante Const. ant.* p. 111.

trace in the obscurity of the latter part of the first century. During this period, however, took place the regular formation of the young Christian republics, in all the more considerable cities of the empire. The primitive constitution of these churches is a subject which it is impossible to decline: though few points in Christian history rest on more dubious and imperfect, in general or inferential evidence, yet few have been contested with greater pertinacity.

The whole of Christendom, when it emerges out of the obscurity of the first century, appears uniformly governed by certain superiors of each community, called "bishops." But the origin and extent of this superiority, and the manner in which the bishop assumed a distinct authority from the inferior presbyters, is one of those difficult questions of Christian history, which, since the Reformation, has been more and more darkened by those fatal enemies to candid and dispassionate inquiry, — Prejudice and Interest. The earliest Christian communities appear to have been ruled and represented, in the absence of the apostle who was their first founder, by their elders, who are likewise called "bishops," or "overseers of the churches." These presbyter bishops and the deacons are the only two orders which we discover at first in the church of Ephesus, at Philippi, and perhaps in Crete.¹ On the other hand, at a very early period, one religious functionary, superior to the rest, appears to have been almost universally recognized; at least, it is difficult to understand how, in so short a time, among communities, though not entirely disconnected, yet scattered over the whole Roman world, a scheme of

¹ Acts xx. 17, compared with 28; Phil. i. 1; Titus i. 5-7.

government popular, or rather aristocratical, should become, even in form, monarchical. Neither the times nor the circumstances of the infant Church, nor the primitive spirit of the religion, appear to favor a general, a systematic, and an unauthorized usurpation of power on the part of the supreme religious functionary.¹ Yet the change has already taken place within the apostolic times. The church of Ephesus, which in the Acts is represented by its elders, in the Revelations² is represented by its angel or bishop. We may, perhaps, arrive at a more clear and intelligible view of this subject, by endeavoring to trace the origin and development of the Christian communities.

¹ The most plausible way of accounting for this total revolution is by supposing that the affairs of each community or church were governed by a college of presbyters, one of whom necessarily presided at their meetings, and gradually assumed, and was recognized as possessing, a superior function and authority. In expressing my dissatisfaction with a theory adopted by Mosheim, by Gibbon, by Neander, and by most of the learned foreign writers, I have scrutinized my own motives with the utmost suspicion, and can only declare that I believe myself actuated only by the calm and candid desire of truth. But the universal and almost simultaneous elevation of the bishop, under such circumstances, in every part of the world (though it must be admitted that he was for a long time assisted by the presbyters in the discharge of his office), appears to me an insuperable objection to this hypothesis. The later the date which is assumed for the general establishment of the episcopal authority, the less likely was it to be general. It was only during the first period of undivided unity that such an usurpation (for such it must have been according to this theory) could have been universally acquiesced in without resistance. All presbyters, according to this view, with one consent, gave up, or allowed themselves to be deprived of, their co-ordinate and co-equal dignity. The further we advance in Christian history, the more we discover the common motives of human nature at work. In this case alone, are we to suppose them without influence? Yet we discover no struggle, no resistance, no controversy. The uninterrupted line of bishops is traced by the ecclesiastical historian up to the apostles: but no murmur of remonstrance against this usurpation has transpired; no schism, no breach of Christian unity, followed upon this momentous innovation. Nor does any such change appear to have taken place in the office of elder in the Jewish communities: the Rabbinical teachers took the form of a regular hierarchy; their patriarch grew up into a kind of pope, but *episcopal* authority never took root in the synagogue.

² Chap. ii. 1.

The Christian Church was almost universally formed by a secession from a Jewish synagogue. Some synagogues may have become altogether Christian; but, in general, a certain part of an existing community of Jews and Gentile proselytes incorporated themselves into a new society, and met for the purpose of divine worship in some private chamber,—sometimes, perhaps, in a public place, as rather later, during the times of persecution, in a cemetery. The first of these may have answered to a synagogue; the latter, to an unwallèd proseucha. The model of the ancient community would naturally, as far as circumstances might admit, become that of the new. But in their primary constitution there was an essential point of difference. The Jews were a civil as well as a religious, the Christians exclusively a religious, community. Everywhere that the Jews were settled, they were the colony of a nation; they were held together by a kindred, as well as by a religious, bond of union. The governors, therefore, of the community, the Zaknim or elders, the Parnasim or pastors (if this be an early appellation), were by on means necessarily religious functionaries.¹ Another kind of influence besides that of piety—age, worldly experience, wealth—would obtain the chief and ruling power in the society. The government of these elders neither rested on, nor required, spiritual authority. Their grave example would enforce the general observance, their censure repress any flagrant departure from the Law: they

Christian churches formed from, and on the model of, the synagogue.

¹ In some places, the Jews seem to have been ruled by an Ethnarch, recognized by the Roman civil authorities. Strabo, quoted by Josephus, Antiq. xiv. 12, speaks of the Ethnarch in Alexandria. Josephus mentions their Archon or chief, in Antioch. The more common constitution seems to have been the *γερουσίαι* and *δυνάται*, the elders or authorities.

might be consulted on any difficult or unusual point of practice; but it was not till the new Rabbinical priesthood was established, and the Mischna and the Talmud universally received as the national code, that the foreign Jews fell under what may be considered sacerdotal dominion. At this time, the synagogue itself was only supplementary to the great national religious ceremonial of the Temple. The Levitical race claimed no peculiar sanctity, at least it discharged no priestly office, beyond the bounds of the Holy Land, or the precincts of the Temple; nor was an authorized instructor of the people necessary to the service of the synagogue. It was an assembly for the purpose of worship, not of teaching. The instructor of the people, the copy of the Law, lay in the ark at the east end of the building; it was brought forth with solemn reverence, and an appointed portion read during the service. But oral instruction, though it might sometimes be, and no doubt frequently was, delivered, was no *necessary* part of the ceremonial. Any one, it should seem, who considered himself qualified, and obtained permission from the Archisynagogi, the governors of the community, who exercised a sort of presidency in the synagogue, might address the assembly. It was in this character that the Christian apostle usually began to announce his religion. But neither the Chazan, or angel¹ of the synagogue (which was a purely ministerial, comparatively a servile, office), nor the heads of the assembly, possessed any peculiar privilege, or were endowed with any official function as teachers² of the people. Many of the

Essential
difference
between the
church and
the syna-
gogue.

¹ The "angel" here seems to bear its lower meaning, — a messenger or minister.

² Vitringa labors to prove the point, that the chief of the synagogue exer-

more remote synagogues can rarely have been honored by the presence of the "Wise Men," as they were afterwards called, — the lawyers of this period. The Jewish religion was, at this time, entirely ceremonial; it did not necessarily demand exposition; its form was moulded into the habits of the people; and till disturbed by the invasion of Christianity, or among very flourishing communities, where it assumed a more intellectual tone, and extended itself by the proselytism of the Gentiles, it was content to rest in that form.¹ In the great days of Jewish intellectual activity, the adjacent Law-school, usually inseparable from the synagogue, might rather be considered the place of religious instruction. This was a kind of chapter-house or court of ecclesiastical, with the Jews identical with their national, law. Here knotty points were publicly debated; and "the Wise," or the more distinguished of the lawyers or interpreters of the Law, as the Rabbinical hierarchy of a later period, established their character for sagacious discernment of the meaning and intimate acquaintance with the whole body of the Law.

Thus, then, the model upon which the Church might be expected to form itself, may be called purely aristocratical. The process by which it passed into the monarchical form, however limited the supreme power of the individual, may be traced to the existence of a monarchical principle anterior to their religious oligarchy, and which distinguished the Christian Church

cised an office of this kind, but, in my opinion, without success. It appears to have been a regular part of the Essenian service, a distinction which Vitringa has neglected to observe. — *De Syn. Vet. lib. iii. c. 6, 7.*

¹ The reading of the Law, prayers, and psalms, were the ceremonial of the synagogue. Probably the greater part of their proselytism took place in private, though, as we know from Horace, the Jewish synagogue was even in Rome a place of resort to the curious, the speculative, and the idle.

in its first origin from the Jewish synagogue. The Christians from the first were a purely religious community; this was their primary bond of union; they had no national law which held them together as a separate people. Their civil union was a subordinate effect, arising out of their incorporation as a spiritual body. The submission of their temporal concerns to the adjudication of their own community was a consequence of their respect for the superior justice and wisdom which sprung from their religious principles, and an aversion from the litigious spirit engendered by the complicated system of Roman jurisprudence.¹

Christian
Church
formed round
an individual.

In their origin, they were almost universally a community, formed, as it were, round an individual. The apostle, or primitive teacher, was installed at once in the office of chief religious functionary; and the chief religious functionary is the natural head of a purely religious community. Oral instruction, as it was the first, so it must have continued to be the living, conservative, and expansive principle of the community.² It was, anterior to the existence of any book, the inspired record and supreme authority of the faith. As long as this teacher remained in the city, or as often as he returned, he

¹ The apostle enjoined this secession from the ordinary courts of justice — 1 Cor. vi. 1-8.

² For some time, indeed, as in the Jewish synagogue, what was called the gift of prophecy seems to have been more general: any individual who professed to speak under the direct impulse of the Holy Spirit was heard with attentive reverence. But it may be questioned, whether this, and the display of the other *χαρίσματα* recounted by the apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 4-10, were more than subsidiary to the regular and systematic teaching of the apostolic founder of the community. The question is, not whether each member was not at liberty to contribute, by any faculty which had been bestowed on him by God, to the general edification; but whether, above and anterior to all this, there was not some recognized parent of each church, who was treated with paternal deference, and exercised, when present, paternal authority.

would be recognized as the legitimate head of the society. But not only the apostle, in general the primitive teacher likewise, was a missionary, travelling incessantly into distant regions for the general dissemination of Christianity, rather than residing in one spot to organize a local community.¹ In his absence, the government, and even the instruction, of the community devolved upon the senate of elders, who were likewise overseers, ἐπίσκοποι (no doubt the name was used interchangeably for some time);² yet there was still a recognized supremacy in the founder of the church.³ The wider, however, the dissemination of Christianity, the more rare, and at longer intervals, the presence of the apostle. An appeal to his authority, by letter, became more precarious and interrupted; while at the same time, in many communities, the necessity for his interposition became more frequent and manifest;⁴ and in the common order of

¹ Yet we have an account of a residence even of St. Paul of eighteen months at Corinth, of two years at Ephesus, and he was two years during his first imprisonment at Rome. — Acts xviii. 11; xix. 10; xxviii. 30.

² I have now read with care the best and fairest book on this subject, Rothe, Anfänge der Christlicher Kirche. Though my view of the original monarchical principle is stronger than Rothe's, I see no reason to retract or modify my statement. (1863.)

Rothe's argument (pp. 227-238) against what are called "lay elders," seems to me conclusive.

³ St. Paul considered himself invested with the superintendence of all the churches which he had planted. — 2 Cor. xi. 28.

⁴ St. Jerome, quoted by Hooker (Eccles. Polity, b. vii. vol. iii. p. 130), assigns the origin of episcopacy to the dissensions in the Church, which required a stronger coercive authority. "Till, through instinct of the Devil, there grew in the Church factions, and among the people it began to be professed, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, churches were governed by the common advice of presbyters; but when every one began to reckon those whom he had baptized his own, and not Christ's, it was decreed in the whole world that one chosen out of the presbyters should be placed above the rest, to whom all care of the church should belong, and so all seeds of schism be removed."

The government of the Church seems to have been considered a subordi-

nature, even independent of the danger of persecution, the primitive founder, the legitimate head of the community, would vacate his place by death. That the apostle should appoint some distinguished individual as the delegate, the representative, the successor, to his authority, as primary instructor of the community; invest him in an episcopacy or overseership, superior to that of the co-ordinate body of elders,—is, in itself, by no means improbable: it harmonizes with the period in which we discover, in the Sacred Writings, this change in the form of the permanent government of the different bodies; accounts most easily for the general submission to the authority of one religious chief magistrate, so unsatisfactorily explained by the accidental pre-eminence of the president of a college of co-equal presbyters; and is confirmed by general tradition, which has ever, in strict unison with every other part of Christian history, preserved the names of many successors of the apostles, the first bishops in most of the larger cities in which Christianity was first established.

But the authority of the bishop was that of influence, rather than of power. After the first nomination by the apostle (if such nomination, as we suppose, generally took place), his successor was elective by that kind of acclamation which raised at once the individual most eminent for his piety and virtue to the post, which was that of danger, as well as of distinction. For a long period, the suffrages of the community ratified the appointment. Episcopal government was thus, as long as Christianity remained unleavened by worldly passions and interests, essential function. “And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers; *after that*, miracles, the gifts of healing, *helps, governments*, diversities of tongues.”—1 Cor. xii. 28.

tially popular. The principle of subordination was inseparable from the humility of the first converts. Rights are never clearly defined till they are contested; nor is authority limited so long as it rests upon general reverence. When on the one side aggression, on the other jealousy and mistrust, begin, then it must be fenced by usage and defined by law. Thus, while I am inclined to consider the succession of bishops from the apostolic times to be undeniable, the nature and extent of the authority which they derived from the apostles are altogether uncertain. The ordination or consecration, whatever it might be, to that office, of itself conveyed neither inspiration nor the power of working miracles, which, with the direct commission from the Lord himself, distinguished and set apart the primary apostles from the rest of mankind. It was only in a very limited and imperfect sense that they could, even in the sees founded by the apostles, be called the successors of the apostles.

The presbyters were, in their origin, the *ruling* powers of the young communities; but, in a society founded solely on a religious basis, religious qualifications would be almost exclusively considered. In the absence, therefore, of the primary teacher, they would assume that office likewise. In this they would differ from the Jewish elders. As the The presbyters. most eminent in piety and Christian attainments, they would be advanced by, or at least with, the general consent, to their dignified station. The same piety and attainments would designate them as best qualified to keep up and to extend the general system of instruction. They would be the regular and perpetual expositors of the Christian law,¹—the reciters of the

¹ Here, likewise, the possessors of the *χαρίσματα* would be the casual and

life, the doctrines, the death, the resurrection, of Christ: till the Gospels were written, and generally received, they would be the living Evangelists, the oral Scriptures, the spoken Gospel. They would not merely regulate and lead the devotions, administer the rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but repeat again and again, for the further confirmation of the believers and the conversion of Jews and Heathens, the facts and the tenets of the new religion. The government, in fact, in communities bound together by Christian brotherhood (such as we may suppose to have been the first Christian churches, which were happily undistracted by the disputes arising out of the Judaical controversy), would be an easy office, and entirely subordinate to that of instruction and edification. The communities would be almost self-governed by the principle of Christian love which first drew them together. The deacons were from the first an inferior order, and exercised a purely ministerial office, — distributing the common fund to the poorer members, though the administration of the pecuniary concerns of the Church soon became of such importance as to require the superintendence of the higher rulers. The other functions of the deacons were altogether of a subordinate character.

Such would be the ordinary development of a Christian community, in the first case monarchical, as founded by an individual apostle or recognized teacher

subsidiary instructors, or rather the gifted promoters of Christian piety, each in his separate sphere, according to his distinctive grace. But besides these, even if they were found in all churches, which is by no means clear, regular and systematic teachers would be necessary to a religion which probably could only subsist, certainly could not propagate itself with activity or to any great extent, except by this constant exposition of its principles in the public assembly, as well as in the more private communications of individuals.

of Christianity; subsequently, in the absence of that teacher, aristocratical, under a senate formed according to Jewish usage, though not precisely on Jewish principles; until, the place of the apostle being supplied by a bishop, in a certain sense his representative or successor, it would revert to a monarchical form, limited rather by the religion itself than by any appointed controlling power. As long as the same holy spirit of love and charity actuated the whole body, the result would be an harmony, not from the counter-acting powers of opposing forces, but from the consentient will of the general body; and the will of the government would be the expression of the universal popular sentiment.¹ Where, however, from the first, the Christian community was formed of conflicting parties, or where conflicting principles began to operate immediately upon the foundation of the society, no single person would be generally recognized as the authoritative teacher, and the assumption and recognition of the episcopate would be more slow, or, indeed, would not take place at all till the final triumph of one of the conflicting parties. These communities retained, of necessity, the republican form. Such was the state of the Corinthian church, which was Church of Corinth an exception. from its origin, or almost immediately after, divided into three separate parties, with a leading teacher or teachers at the head of each.² The Petrine, or the

¹ Such is the theory of episcopal government in a pleasing passage in the Epistles of Ignatius: "Ὅθεν πρέπει ὑμῖν συντρεῖσθαι τῇ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου γνώμῃ ὡς καὶ ποιεῖτε. Τὸ γὰρ ἄξιονόμαστον ὑμῶν πρεσβυτέριον, τοῦ θεοῦ ἄξιον οὕτως συνήρμωστοι τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ ὡς χορδαὶ κιθάρα· διὰ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ ὁμονοίᾳ ὑμῶν, καὶ συμφώνῳ ἀγάπῃ Ἰησοῦς Χρῆστος ἁγιάζεται καὶ οἱ κατ' ἄνδρα δὲ χορδὴ γίνεσθε, ἵνα σύμφωνοι ὄντες ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ, χρῶμα θεοῦ λαβόντες ἐν ἐνότητι, ἁγιάζεσθαι ἐν φωνῇ μὴ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς, κ.τ.λ. — Ad Ephes. p. 12, edit. Cotel. I speak of these Epistles in a subsequent note.

² I was led to conjecture that the distracted state of the church of Cor

ultra-Judaic, the Apolline, or more moderate Jewish party, contested the supremacy with the followers of St. Paul. Different individuals possessed, exercised, and even abused different gifts. The authority of Paul himself appears clearly, by his elaborate vindication of his apostolic office, by no means to have been generally recognized. No apostolic head, therefore, would assume an uncontested supremacy, nor would the parties coalesce in the choice of a superior. Corinth, probably, was the last community which settled down under the general episcopal constitution.

The manner and the period of the separation of a distinct class, a hierarchy, from the general body of the community, and the progress of the great division between the clergy and the laity,¹ are equally obscure with the primitive constitution of the Church. Like the Judaism of the provinces, Christianity had no sacerdotal order. But as the more eminent members of the community were admitted to take the lead, on account of their acknowledged religious superiority, from their zeal, their talents, their gifts, their sanctity, the general reverence would, of itself, speedily set them apart as of a higher order; they would form the purest aristocracy, and soon be divided by a distinct line of demarcation from the rest of the community. What-

inith might induce the apostles to establish elsewhere a more firm and vigorous authority, before I remembered the passage of St. Jerome quoted above, which coincides with this view. Corinth has been generally taken as the model of the early Christian constitution: I suspect that it was rather an anomaly.

¹ Already the *λαῖκοι* are a distinct class in the Epistle of Clemens to the Corinthians (c. xl. p. 170, edit. Coteler). This Epistle is confidently appealed to by both parties in the controversy about church-government, and altogether satisfies neither. It is clear, however, from the tone of the whole Epistle, that the church at Corinth was any thing rather than a model of church-government: it had been rent with schisms ever since the days of the apostle

ever the ordination might be which designated them for their peculiar function, whatever power or authority might be communicated by the "imposition of hands," it would add little to the reverence with which they were invested. It was at first the Christian who sanctified the function: afterwards the function sanctified the man. But the civil and religious concerns of the Church were so moulded up together, or, rather, the temporal were so absorbed by the spiritual, that not merely the teacher, but the governor, — not merely the bishop, properly so called, but the presbyter, in his character of ruler as well as of teacher, — shared in the same peculiar veneration. The bishop would be necessarily mingled up in the few secular affairs of the community, the governors bear their part in the religious ceremonial. In this respect, again, they differed from their prototypes, or elders of the synagogue. Their office was, of necessity, more religious. The admission of members into the Jewish synagogue, except in the case of proselytes of righteousness, was a matter of hereditary right: circumcision was a domestic, not a public, ceremony. But baptism, or the initiation into the Christian community, was a solemn ceremonial, requiring previous examination and probation. The governing power would possess and exercise the authority to admit into the community. They would perform, or at all events superintend, the initiatory rite of baptism. The other distinctive rite of Christianity, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, would require a more active interference and co-operation on the part of those who presided over the community. To this there was nothing analogous in the office of the Jewish elder. Order would require that this ceremony should be administered by certain func

tionaries. If the bishop presided, after his appointment, both at the Lord's Supper itself and in the agape or feast which followed it, the elders would assist, not merely in maintaining order, but would officiate throughout the ceremony. In proportion to the reverence for the consecrated elements would be the respect towards those under whose especial prayers, and in whose hands, probably from the earliest period, they were sanctified for the use of the assembly. The presbyters would likewise possess the chief voice, a practical initiative, in the nomination of the bishop. From all these different functions, the presbyters, and at length the deacons, became, as well as the bishop, a sacred order. But, the exclusive or sacerdotal principle once admitted in a religious community, its own corporate spirit and the public reverence would cause it to recede further and further, and draw the line of demarcation with greater rigor and depth. They would more and more insulate themselves from the commonalty of the Christian republic; they would become a senate, a patrician, or a privileged order; and this secession into their peculiar sphere would be greatly facilitated by the regular gradations of the faithful and the catechumen, the perfect and the imperfect, the initiate and half-initiate, Christians. The greater the variety, the more strict the subordination of ranks.

Thus the bishop gradually assumed the title of pontiff: the presbyters became a sacerdotal order. From the Old Testament, and even from Paganism, the Christians, at first as ennobling metaphors, adopted their sacred appellations. Insensibly the meaning of these significant titles worked into the Christian system. They assumed, as it were, a privilege of nearer

approach to the Deity ; and a priestly caste grew rapidly up in a religion which, in its primary institution, acknowledged only one mediator between earth and heaven. I shall subsequently trace the growth of the sacerdotal principle, and the universal establishment of the hierarchy.

VOL. II.

CHAPTER V.

Christianity and Orientalism.

CHRISTIANITY had not only to contend with the Judaism of its native region and the Paganism of the Western world, but likewise with the Asiatic religions, which, in the Eastern provinces of the Roman empire, maintained their ground, or mingled themselves with the Grecian Polytheism, and had even penetrated into Palestine. In the silence of its authentic records, the direct progress of Christianity in the East can neither be accurately traced nor clearly estimated: its conflict with Orientalism is chiefly visible in the influence of the latter upon the general system of Christianity, and in the tenets of the different sects which, from Simon Magus to Manes, attempted to reconcile the doctrines of the Gospel with the theological system of Asia. In the West, Christianity advanced with gradual but unobstructed and unreceding progress, till first the Roman empire, and successively the barbarous nations who occupied or subdued the rest of Europe, were brought within its pale. No new religion arose to dispute its supremacy; and the feeble attempt of Julian to raise up a Platonic Paganism in opposition to the religion of Christ must have failed, even if it had not been cut short in its first growth by the death of its imperial patron. In Asia, the progress of Christianity was suddenly arrested by the revival of Zoroastrianism after the restoration

of the Persian kingdom upon the ruins of the Parthian monarchy; and, at a later period, the vestiges of its former success were almost entirely obliterated by the desolating and all-absorbing conquests of Mohammedanism. The Armenian was the only national church which resisted alike the persecuting edicts of the Sassanian fire-worshippers, and, submitting to the yoke of the Mohammedan conqueror, rejected the worship of the Prophet. The other scattered communities of Christians, disseminated through various parts of Asia, on the coast of Malabar, perhaps in China, have no satisfactory evidence of apostolic or even of very early date: they are so deeply impregnated with the Nestorian system of Christianity, which, during the interval between the decline of the reformed Zoroastrianism and the first outburst of Islamism, spread to a great extent throughout every part of the Eastern Continent,¹ that there is every reason to suppose them Nestorian in their origin.² The contest, then, of Christianity with the Eastern religions must be traced in their re-action upon the new religion of the West. By their treacherous alliance, they probably operated more extensively to the detriment of the Evangelic religion than Paganism by its open opposition. Asiatic influences have worked more completely into the body and essence of Christianity than any other foreign elements; and it is by no means improbable, that tenets, which had their origin in India, have for many centuries predominated in, or materially affected, the Christianity of the whole Western world.

Palestine was admirably situated to become the

¹ There is an extremely good view of the origin and history of the Christian communities in India, in Bohlen, *Das alte Indien*.

² Compare the new edition of Gibbon and the editor's note on the Nestorian Christians with the famous inscription of Siganfu, viii. 347.

centre and point of emanation for an universal religion.

Situation
of Palestine
favorable
for a new
religion.

On the confines of Asia and Europe, yet sufficiently secluded from both to be out of the way of the constant flux and reflux of a foreign population, it commanded Egypt, and, through Egypt, associated Africa with the general moral kingdom. But it was not merely calculated for the birthplace of an universal faith by its local position.

Judaism.

Judaism, as it were, in its character (putting out of sight, for an instant, its divine origin) stood between the religions of the East and the West. It was the connecting link between the European and the Asiatic mind. In speculative sublimity, the doctrine of the Divine Unity soared to an equal height with the vast and imaginative cosmogonies of the East; while, in its practical tendencies, it approximated to the active and rational genius of the West.

The religions of Asia appear, if not of regularly affiliated descent, yet to possess a common and generic character, modified, indeed, by the genius of the different people, and perhaps by the prevailing tone of mind in the authors and founders of new doctrines. From the banks of the Ganges, probably from the shores of the Yellow Sea and the coasts of further India, to the Phœnician borders of the Mediterranean and the undefined limits of Phrygia in Asia Minor, there was that connection and similitude, that community of certain elementary principles, that tendency to certain combinations of physical and moral ideas, which may be expressed by the term *Orientalism*.¹ The specula-

¹ Compare Windischman, *Philosophie in Fortgang der Welt-Geschichte*. Windischman was a friend—I believe I may venture to say a disciple—of F. Schlegel, and belongs to the high Roman-Catholic school in Germany. His book, which is full of abstruse thought and learning, develops the theory of a primitive tradition diffused through the East.

tive theology of the higher, the sacerdotal order, which in some countries left the superstitions of the vulgar undisturbed, or allowed their own more sublime conceptions to be lowered to their rude and limited material notions, aspired to the primal Source of Being. The Emanation system of India, according to which the whole worlds flowed from the Godhead, and were finally to be re-absorbed into it; the Pantheism into which this degenerated, and which made the collective Universe itself the Deity; the Dualism of Persia, according to which the antagonist powers were created by, or proceeded from, the One Supreme and Uncreated; the Chaldean doctrine of divine energies or intelligences, the prototypes of the Cabalistic Sephiroth, and of the later Gnostic Æons, the same, no doubt, under different names, with the Æon and Protogenes, the Genos and Genea, with their regularly coupled descendants in the Phœnician cosmogony of Sanchoniathon; and, finally, the primitive and simpler worship of Egypt,—all these are either branches of one common stock, or expressions of the same state of the human mind, working with kindred activity on the same visible phenomena of nature, and with the same object.

The Asiatic mind impersonated, though it did not, with the Greek, humanize every thing. Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, the Creative and Destructive energy of nature, the active and passive Powers of generation, moral Perfection and Wisdom, Reason and Speech, even Agriculture and the Pastoral life, each was a distinct and intelligent being; they wedded each other according to their apparent correspondences; they begat progeny according to the natural affiliation or consequence of ideas.

One great elementary principle pervaded the whole religious systems of the East,—the connection of *moral* *with physical ideas*; the inherent *purity, the divinity, of mind or spirit*; the inalienable *evil of its antagonist, matter*. Whether Matter co-existed with the First Great Cause; whether it was created by his power, but, from its innate malignity, became insubordinate to his will; whether it was extraneous to his existence, necessarily subsisting, though without form, till its inert and shapeless mass was worked upon by the Deity himself, or by his primal Power or Emanation, the Demiurge or Creator of the existing worlds,—on these points the different national creeds were endlessly diversified. But, in its various forms, the principle itself was the universal doctrine of the Eastern world; it was developed in their loftiest philosophy (in fact, their higher philosophy and their speculative religion were the same thing); it gave a kind of coloring even to their vulgar superstition, and operated, in many cases almost to an incredible extent, on their social and political system.

This great primal tenet is alike the elementary principle of the higher Brahminism and the more moral Buddhism of India and the remoter East. The theory of the division of castes supposes, that a larger portion of the pure mind of the Deity is infused into the sacerdotal and superior orders; they are nearer the Deity, and with more immediate hope of being re-absorbed into the divine essence; while the lower classes are more inextricably immersed in the grosser matter of the world, their feeble portion of the essential spirit of the Divinity contracted and lost in the predominant mass of corruption and

malignity.¹ The Buddhist, substituting a moral for a hereditary approximation to the pure and elementary mind, rests, nevertheless, on the same primal theory, and carries the notion of the abstraction of the spiritual part from the foul and corporeal being to an equal, if not a greater, height of contemplative mysticism.² Hence the sanctity of fire among the Persians;³ that element which is most subtle and defecated from all material corruption: it is therefore the representative of pure elementary mind, of Deity itself.⁴ It exists independent of the material forms in which it abides, the sun and the heavenly bodies. To infect this holy element with any excretion or emanation from the material form of man, to contaminate it with the putrescent effluvia of the dead and soulless corpse, was the height of guilt and impiety.

This one simple principle is the parent of that asceticism which maintained its authority among all the older religions of the remoter East, Source of asceticism. forced its way at a very early period into Christianity, where, for some centuries, it exercised a predominant influence, and subdued even the active and warlike genius of Mohammedanism to its dreamy and ecstatic influence. On the cold table-lands of Thibet, in the forests of India, among the busy population of China, on the burning shores of Siam, in Egypt and in Pales-

¹ The self-existing power declared the purest part of him to be the mouth. Since the Brahmen sprung from the most excellent part; since he was the first-born, and since he possesses the Veda, — he is by right the chief of the whole creation. — Jones's Menu, i. 92, 93.

² See the tracts of Mahony, Joinville, Hodgson, and Wilson, in the Asiatic Researches; Schmidt, Geschichte der Ost Mongolen; Bergman, Nomadische Streifereyen, &c.

³ Hyde, De Relig. Persarum, p. 13, *et alibi*. Kleuker, Anhang zum Zendavesta, vol. i. p. 116, 117. De Guigniaut, Religions de l'Antiquité, l. ii. c. 3, p. 333.

⁴ Kleuker, Anhang zum Zendavesta, vol. i. pt. 2, p. 147. De Guigniaut, *ubi supra*.

tine, in Christianized Europe, in Mohammedanized Asia, the worshipper of the Lama, the Faquir, the Bonze, the Talapoin, the Essene, the Therapeutist, the Monk, and the Dervish, have withdrawn from the society of man, in order to abstract the pure mind from the dominion of foul and corrupting matter. Under each system, the perfection of human nature was estrangement from the influence of the senses, — those senses which were enslaved to the material elements of the world ; an approximation to the essence of the Deity, by a total secession from the affairs, the interests, the passions, the thoughts, the common being and nature of man. The practical operation of this elementary principle of Eastern religion has deeply influenced the whole history of man. But it had made no progress in Europe till after the introduction of Christianity. The manner in which it allied itself with, or rather incorporated itself into, a system, to the original nature and design of which it appears altogether foreign, will form a most important and perhaps not uninteresting chapter in the History of Christianity.

Celibacy. Celibacy was the offspring of asceticism, but it does not appear absolutely essential to it ; whether insulted nature re-asserts its rights, and reconciles to the practice that which is in apparent opposition to the theory, or whether it revenges, as it were, this rebellion of nature on one point, by its more violent and successful invasions upon its unconquerable propensities on others. The Muni in India is accompanied by his wife, who shares his solitude, and seems to offer no impediment to his sanctity,¹ though in some cases it may be that all

¹ Abandoning all food eaten in towns, and all his household utensils, let

connubial intercourse is sternly renounced. In Palestine, the Essene, in his higher state of perfection, stood in direct opposition to the spirit of the books of Moses, on which he still looked with the profoundest reverence, by altogether refraining from marriage. It was perhaps in this form that Eastern asceticism first crept into Christianity. It assumed the elevating and attractive character of higher personal purity; it drew the line of demarcation more rigidly against the loose morality of the Heathen; it afforded the advantage of detaching the first itinerant preachers of Christianity more entirely from worldly interests; enabled them to devote their whole, undistracted attention to the propagation of the faith; and left them, as it were, more loose from the world, ready to break the few and slender ties which connected them with it at the first summons to a glorious martyrdom.¹ But it was not, as we shall presently observe, till Gnosticism began to exercise its influence on Christianity,² that emulous of its dangerous rival, or

him repair to the lonely wood, committing the care of his wife to his sons, or accompanied by her, if she choose to attend him. — Sir W. Jones's Menu, vi. 3. I venture to refer to the pathetic tale of the hermit with his wife and son, from the Mahâ Bhârata, in my translations from the Sanskrit. Compare Vishnu Purana, p. 295.

In the very curious account of the Buddhist monks (the *Σαμάναιοι*, — the Schamans) in Porphyrius de Abstinentiâ, lib. iv. 17, the Buddhist ascetic abandons his wife; and this, in general, agrees with the Buddhist theory. Female contact is unlawful to the Buddha ascetic. See a curious instance in Mr. Wilson's Hindu Theatre, — The Toycart, Act viii., *in fine*.

¹ Clement of Alexandria, however, asserts that St. Paul was really married, but left his wife behind him, lest she should interfere with his ministry. This is his interpretation of 1 Cor. ix. 5.

² Tertullian adv. Marc. i. 29. "Non tingitur apud illum caro, nisi virgo, nisi vidua, nisi cælebs, nisi divortio baptismum mereatur . . . nec præscribimus sed suademus sanctitatem . . . tunc denique conjugium exertè defendentes cum inimicè accusatur spurcitæ nomine in destructionem creatoris qui proinde conjugium pro rei honestate benedixit, incrementum generis humani." .

infected with its foreign opinions, the Church, in its general sentiment, espoused and magnified the pre-eminent virtue of celibacy.¹

The European mind of the older world, as represented by the Greeks and Romans, repelled Unknown in Greece and Rome. for a long time, in the busy turmoil of political development and the absorbing career of war and conquest, this principle of inactivity and secession from the ordinary affairs of life. No sacerdotal caste established this principle of superiority over the active warrior, or even over the laborious husbandman. With the citizen of the stirring and factious republics of Greece, the highest virtue was of a purely political and practical character. The whole man was public: his individuality, the sense of which was continually suggested and fostered under the other system, was lost in the member of the commonwealth. That which contributed nothing to the service of the state was held in no respect. The mind, in its abstracted flights, obtained little honor: it was only as it worked upon the welfare, the amusement, or the glory of the republic, that its dignity was estimated. The philosopher might discuss the comparative superiority of the practical or the contemplative life; but his loftiest contemplations were occupied with realities, or what may be considered idealizing those realities to a higher degree of perfection: to make good citizens was the utmost ambition of his wisdom; an Utopia was his heaven. The Cynic, who in the East, or in Europe after it became impregnated with Eastern doctrines,

¹ Compare the whole argument of the third book of the *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandria. In one passage he condemns celibacy, as leading to misanthropy. Συνορῶ δὲ ὅπως τῇ προφάσει τοῦ γάμου οἱ μὲν ἀπεσχόμενοι τούτου, μὴ κατὰ τὴν ἀγίαν γνώσιν, εἰς μισανθρωπίαν ἐπεβήθησαν καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀγάπης οἴχεται παρ' αὐτοῖς. — *Strom.* iii. 9.

would have retired into the desert to his solitary hermitage, in order to withdraw himself entirely from the common interests, sentiments, and connections of mankind; in Greece, took up his station in the crowded forum, or, pitching his tub in the midst of the concourse at the public games, inveighed against the vices and follies of mankind. Plato, if he had followed the natural bent of his genius, might have introduced, and indeed did intro-
Plato.
duce, as much as the Grecian mind was capable of imbibing of this theory of the opposition of mind and matter, with its ordinary consequences. The communities of his older master Pythagoras, who had probably visited the East, and drank deep of the Oriental mysticism, approached in some respects nearer to the contemplative character of monastic institutions. But the active mind of the Greek predominated; and the followers of Pythagoras, instead of founding cœnotic institutions, or secluding themselves in meditative solitude, settled some of the flourishing republics of Magna Græcia. The great master, in whose steps Plato professed to tread more closely, was so essentially practical and unimaginative as to bind his followers down to a less Oriental system of philosophy. While, therefore, in his *Timæus*, Plato attempted to harmonize parts of the cosmogonical theories of Asia with the more humanized mythology of Greece, the work which was more accordant to the genius of his country was his *Republic*, in which all his idealism was, as it were, confined to the earth. Even his religion, though of much sublimer cast than the popular superstition, was yet considered chiefly in its practical operation on the welfare of the state. It was his design to elevate humanity to a higher

state of moral dignity; to cultivate the material body, as well as the immaterial soul, to the height of perfection; not to sever, as far as possible, the connection between these ill-assorted companions, or to withdraw the purer mind from its social and political sphere, into solitary and inactive communion with the Deity.

In Rome, the general tendency of the national mind was still more essentially public and political. In the republic,—except in a few less distinguished men, the Lælii and the Attici,—even their philosophy was an intellectual recreation between the more pressing avocations of their higher duties: it was either to brace and mature the mind for future service to the state, or as a solace in hours of disappointed ambition or the haughty satiety of glory. Civil science was the end and aim of all their philosophic meditation. Like their ancient king, if they retired for communion with the Egeria of philosophy, it was in order to bring forth, on their return, more ample stores of political and legislative wisdom. Under the imperial government, they took refuge in the lofty reveries of the porch, as they did in inordinate luxury, from the degradation and enforced inactivity of servitude. They fled to the philosophic retirement, from the barrenness, in all high or stirring emotions, which had smitten the senate and the Comitia; still looking back with a vain but lingering hope, that the state might summon them again from retirement without dignity, from a contemplative life, which by no means implied an approximation to the divine, but rather a debasement of the human nature. Some, indeed, degraded their high tone of philosophy by still mingling in the servile politics of the day: Seneca lived and died the votary and the victim of

court intrigue. The Thraseas stood aloof, not in ecstatic meditation on the primal Author of Being, but on the departed liberties of Rome; their soul aspired no higher than to unite itself with the ancient genius of the republic.

Orientalism had made considerable progress towards the West before the appearance of Christianity. While the popular Pharisaism of the Jews had embodied some of the more practical tenets of Zoroastrianism, the doctrines of the remoter East had found a welcome reception with the Essene. Yet, even with him, regular and unintermitting labor, not inert and meditative abstraction, was the principle of the ascetic community. It might almost seem that there subsisted some secret and indelible congeniality, some latent consanguinity, whether from kindred, common descent, or from conquest, between the caste-divided population on the shores of the Ganges, and the same artificial state of society in the valley of the Nile, so as to assimilate in so remarkable a manner their religion.¹ It is certain, that the genuine Indian mysticism first established a permanent Western settlement in the deserts of Egypt. Its first combination seems to have been with the Egyptian Judaism of Alexandria, and to have arisen from the dreaming Platonism, which, in the schools of that city, had been engrafted on the Mosaic Institutes. The Egyptian Monks were the lineal descendants of the Jewish Therapeutæ, described by Philo.² Though the Thera-

Orientalism
in Western
Asia.

¹ Bohlen's work, *Das alte Indien*, — of which the excellence in all other respects, as a condensed abstract of all that our own countrymen and the scholars of Germany and France have collected concerning India, will be universally acknowledged, — is written to maintain the theory of the early connection of India and Egypt.

² Philonis Opera, Mangey, vol. ii. p. 471.

peutæ, like the Essenes, were in some respects a productive community, yet they approached much nearer to the contemplative and indolent fraternities of the farther East. The arid and rocky desert around them was too stubborn to make much return to their less regular and less systematic cultivation: visionary indolence would grow upon them by degrees. The communities either broke up into the lairs of solitary hermits, or were constantly throwing off their more enthusiastic votaries deeper into the desert: the severer mortifications of the flesh required a more complete isolation from the occupations, as well as the amusements or enjoyments, of life. To change the wilderness into a garden by patient industry was to intrall the spirit in some degree to the service of the body; and, in process of time, the principle was carried to its height. The more dreary the wilderness, the more unquestioned the sanctity of its inhabitant; the more complete and painful the privation, the more holy the worshipper; the more the man put off his own nature, and sank below the animal to vegetative existence, the more consummate his spiritual perfection. The full growth of this system was of a much later period: it did not come to maturity till after Christianity had passed through its conflict with Gnosticism; but its elements were, no doubt, floating about in the different Western regions of Asia, and either directly through Gnosticism, or from the emulation of the two sects, which outbid each other, as it were, in austerity, it worked, at length, into the very intimate being of the Gospel religion.

The singular felicity, the skill and dexterity, if I may so speak, with which Christianity at first wound its

way through these conflicting elements, combining what was pure and lofty in each, in some instances unavoidably speaking their language, and simplifying, harmonizing, and modifying each to its own peculiar system, increases our admiration of its unrivalled wisdom, its deep insight into the universal nature of man, and its pre-acquaintance, as it were, with the countless diversities of human character prevailing at the time of its propagation. But, unless the same profound wisdom had watched over its inviolable preservation, which presided over its origin; unless it had been constantly administered with the same superiority to the common passions and interests and speculative curiosity of man,—a reaction of the several systems over which it prevailed was inevitable. On a wide and comprehensive survey of the whole history of Christianity, and considering it as left altogether to its own native force and impulse, it is difficult to estimate how far the admission, even the predominance, of these foreign elements, by which it was enabled to maintain its hold on different ages and races, may not have contributed both to its original success and its final permanence. The Eastern asceticism outbid Christianity in that austerity, that imposing self-sacrifice, that intensity of devotion, which acts with the greatest rapidity, and secures the most lasting authority over rude and unenlightened minds. By coalescing to a certain point with its antagonist, it embraced within its expanding pale those who would otherwise, according to the spirit of their age, have been carried beyond its sphere by some enthusiasm more popular and better suited to the genius of the time, or the temperament of the individual. If it lost in purity, it gained in power, perhaps in perma-

Combination
of Oriental-
ism with
Christianity.

nence. No doubt, in its first contest with Orientalism were sown those seeds which grew up at a later period into Monasticism; it rejected the tenets, but admitted the more insidious principle of Gnosticism: yet there can be little doubt that in the dark ages, the monastic spirit was among the great conservative and influential elements of Christianity.

The form in which Christianity first encountered this wide-spread Orientalism was either Gnosticism,¹ or, if that philosophy had not then become consolidated into a system, those opinions which subsequently grew up into that prevalent doctrine of Western Asia. The first Orientalist was Simon Magus. In the conflict with St. Peter, related in the Acts, nothing
Simon Magus.
transpires as to the personal history of this

¹ In this view of Gnosticism, besides constant reference to the original authorities, I must acknowledge my obligations to Brucker, *Hist. Phil.* vol. ii. p. 1, c. 3; to Mosheim, *De Reb. Christ.* ante *Const. Mag.*; to Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*; but, above all, to the excellent *Histoire du Gnosticisme*, by M. Matter of Strasburg, 2 vols. 8vo. Paris, 1828. Since the first publication of this work, new light has been thrown on Gnosticism and the Gnostic teaching by the discovery of the (imperfect) *Philosophumena*, first erroneously attributed to Origen by the editor E. Miller, first and conclusively proved by the learning and sagacity of Bunsen to be the work of Hippolytus, Bishop of Porto near Rome, in the early part of the third century. On this point almost all are agreed,—even Bunsen's most learned antagonists on other questions raised by this book, Dr. Wordsworth and Döllinger. On this controversy I have expressed my judgment fully in a note to *Latin Christianity*, vol. i. p. 35. I think Bunsen triumphant in most points. In the *Epistles to Archdeacon Hare*, and in the *Analecta* published by Bunsen, in his great work *Christianity and Mankind*, will be found selected and illustrated the chief texts of the *Philosophumena* which bear on the rise and development of Gnosticism. Perhaps, as usual, Bunsen's bold and imaginative divination sees much which eyes not less keen, but endowed with less magnifying powers, will fail to discern.

Besides this work, the *Christliche Gnosis* of Baur, and the mature opinions of Neander in the second edition of his *History*, will satisfy readers who care to plunge into that dim labyrinth of Gnosticism, and to investigate its mysteries at greater length than the extent and proportions of my work, and my judgment as to the importance of such researches, permit me to expand into. (1863.)

remarkable man, excepting the extensive success with which he had practised his magical arts in Samaria, and the Oriental title which he assumed,—“the Power of God.” His first overtures to the apostle appear as though he were desirous of conciliating the friendship and favor of the new teacher, and would not have been unwilling to have acted a subordinate part in the formation of his increasing sect. But, from his first rejection, Simon Magus was an opponent, if there be any truth in the wild legends, which are still extant, the rival, of Christianity.¹ On the arrival of the Christian teachers in Samaria,—where, up to that period, his influence had predominated,—Simon paid homage to the reality of his miracles, by acknowledging their superiority to his own. Still, it should seem that he only considered them as more adroit wonder-workers, or, as is more probable, possessed of some peculiar secrets beyond his own knowledge of the laws of nature, or possibly (for imposture and superstition are ever closely allied) he may have supposed that they had intercourse with more powerful spirits or intelligences than his own. Jesus was to him either some extraordinary proficient in magic, who had imparted his prevailing gifts to his followers, the apostles; or some superior genius, who lent himself to their bidding; or, what Simon asserted himself to be, some power emanating more directly from the primal Deity. The “gift of the Holy Ghost” seemed to communicate a great portion, at least, of this magic

¹ It is among the most hopeless difficulties in early Christian history to decide, to one's own satisfaction, what groundwork of truth there may be in those works which bear the name of St. Clement, and relate the contests of St. Peter and Simon Magus. That in their present form they are a kind of religious romance, few will doubt; but they are certainly of great antiquity, and it is difficult to suppose them either pure invention or mere embellishments of the simple history in the Acts.

influence, and to place the initiated in possession of some mighty secrets, or to endow him with the control of some potent spirits. Simon's offer of pecuniary remuneration betrays at once either that his own object was sordid, as he suspected theirs to be; or, at the highest, he sought to increase, by a combination with them, his own reputation and influence. Nor, on the indignant refusal of St. Peter, does his entreaty for their prayers, lest he should incur the wrath of their offended Deity, by any means imply a more accurate and Christian conception of their religion: it is exactly the tone of a man, half impostor and half enthusiast, who trembles before the offended anger of some mightier superhuman being, whom his ineffectual magic has no power to control or to appease. We collect no more than this from the narrative in the Acts.¹

Yet, unless Simon was in fact a personage of considerable importance during the early history of Christianity, it is difficult to account for his becoming, as he is called by Beausobre, the hero of the Romance of Heresy. If Simon was the same with that magician, a Cypriot by birth, who was employed by Felix as agent in his intrigue to detach Drusilla from her husband,² this part of his character accords with the charge of licentiousness advanced both against his life and his doctrines by his Christian opponents. This is by no means improbable; and indeed, even if he was not a person thus politically prominent and influential, the early writers of Christianity would scarcely have concurred in representing him as a formidable and dangerous antagonist of the faith, as a kind of

¹ Acts viii. 9, 24.

² Joseph., Ant. xx. 5, 2. Compare Krebs and Kuinoel, in loco Acts Apost.

personal rival of St. Peter, without some other groundwork for the fiction besides the collision recorded in the Acts. The doctrines which are ascribed to him and to his followers, who continued to exist for two or three centuries,¹ harmonize with the glimpse of his character and tenets in the writings of St. Luke.

Simon probably was one of that class of adventurers which abounded at this period, or like Apollonius of Tyana and others at a later time, with whom the opponents of Christianity attempted to confound Jesus and his apostles. His doctrine was Oriental in its language and in its pretensions.² He was the first Æon or Emanation, or rather perhaps the first manifestation, of the primal Deity. He assumed, not merely the title of the Great Power or Virtue of God, but all the other appellations,—the Word, the Perfection, the Paraclete, the Almighty, the whole combined attributes of the Deity.³ He had a companion, Helena, according to the statement of his enemies, a beautiful prostitute,⁴ whom he found at Tyre, who became in like manner the first conception (the Ennœa) of the Deity; but who, by her conjunction with matter, had been enslaved to its malignant influence, and, having fallen under the power of evil

His real
character
and tenets.

His Helena.

¹ Origen denies the existence of living Simonians in his day (*Contra Cels.* lib. i.); which implies that they had subsisted nearly up to that time.

² *Irenæus*, lib. i. c. 20; the fullest of the early authorities on Simon. Compare *Grabe's* notes. The personal conflict with St. Peter in Rome, and the famous inscription, "*Semoni Sanco*," must, I think, be abandoned to legend. That Simon was a heresiarch, and a heresiarch of great power and wide influence, not a mythical personage created out of the passage in the Acts of the Apostles, is further and still more conclusively shown in the Sixth Book of the *Philosophumena*.

³ "*Ego sum Sermo Dei, ego sum Speciosus, ego Paracletus, ego Omnipotens, ego omnia Dei.*"—*Hieronym.* in *Matth.*, Op. iv. 114.

⁴ *Irenæus*, as above.

angels, had been in a constant state of transmigration, and, among other mortal bodies, had occupied that of the famous Helen of Troy. Beausobre,¹ who elevates Simon into a Platonic philosopher, explains the Helena as a sublime allegory. She was the Psyche of his philosophic romance. The soul, by evil influences, had become imprisoned in matter. By her the Deity had created the angels: the angels, enamoured of her, had inextricably entangled her in that polluting bondage, in order to prevent her return to heaven. To fly from their embraces, she had passed from body to body. Connecting this fiction with the Grecian mythology, she was Minerva, or impersonated Wisdom;² perhaps, also, Helena, or embodied Beauty.³

It is by no means inconsistent with the character of Orientalism, or with the spirit of the times, to reconcile much of these different theories. According to the Eastern system of teaching by symbolic action, Simon may have carried about a living and real illustration of his allegory: his Helena may have been to his disciples the mystic image of an Emanation from the Divine Mind; her native purity, indeed, originally defiled by the contagious malignity of matter, but under the guidance of the Hierophant, or rather by her sanctifying association with the "Power of God," either soaring again to her primal sanctity, or even,

¹ Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, i. 35.

² His disciples worshipped two statues, — of Simon as Zeus, of Helen as Athene. *Εἰκόνα τε τοῦ Σίμωνος ἔχουσιν εἰς Διὸς μορφήν, καὶ τῆς Ἑλένης ἐν μορφῇ Ἀθηνᾶς, καὶ ταύτας προσκυνοῦσι, τὸν μὲν καλοῦντες κύριον, τὴν δὲ κυρίαν.* — *Philosophumena*, vi. p. 176.

³ *ἥτις ἀεὶ καταγνομένη ἐν γυναιξὶν ἐτάρασσε τὰς ἐν κόσμῳ δυνάμεις διὰ τὸ ἀντιπερβλήτον αὐτῆς κάλλος*, p. 174. The Trojan war seems to have been held as a type of this strife among the world-ruling angels, caused by Helen.

while the grosser body was still abandoned to its inalienable corruption, emancipating the uninfected and unparticipant soul from all the depravation, almost from the consciousness, of corporeal indulgence. Be this as it may; whether the Probability of the history of Simon. opinions of Simon were derived from Platonism, or, as it is much more likely, immediately from Eastern sources,—his history is singularly characteristic of the state of the public mind at this period of the world. A man assuming the lofty appellation of the Power of God, and, with his female associate, personating the male and female Energies or Intelligences of the Deity, appears to our colder European reason a fiction too monstrous even for the proverbial credulity of human kind. But this Magianism of Simon must be considered in reference to the whole theory of theurgy or magic, and the prevalent theosophy or notions of the divine nature. In the East, superstition had in general repudiated the grossly material forms in which the Western anthropomorphism had embodied its gods; it remained more spiritual, but it made up for this by the fantastic manner in which it multiplied the gradations of spiritual beings more or less remotely connected with the first great Supreme. The more subtile the spirits, in general they were the more beneficent; the more intimately associated with matter, the more malignant. The avowed object of Simon was to destroy the authority of the evil spirits, and to emancipate mankind from their control. This peopling of the universe with a regularly descending succession of beings was common to the whole East; perhaps, in great part, to the West. The later Jewish doctrine of angels and devils approached nearly to it; it lurked in Platonism,

and assumed a higher form in the Eastern cosmogonies. In these it not merely assigned guardian or hostile beings to individuals or to nations, but its peculiar creator to the material universe, from which it aspired altogether to keep aloof the origin and author of the spiritual world; though the latter superior and benignant Being was ordinarily introduced as interfering in some manner to correct, to sanctify, and to spiritualize the world of man; and it was in accordance with this part of the theory that Simon proclaimed himself the representative of Deity. That such was the Simonian doctrine, I think there can be no doubt: a very small part, however, only its elementary notions, can with any probability be traced to Simon himself. He was but the remote parent of a numerous, wide-spread, and inventive line of successors.¹

¹ According to the *Philosophumena*, Simon of Gettim in Samaria called himself a god, in imitation of a certain Apsethus, who in Libya trained some parrots to say, "Apsethus is a god," and then let them loose. They flew abroad, all over Libya and as far as Greece. He obtained divine worship. But a clever Greek found out the trick, caught some of the parrots, and taught them to say, "Apsethus shut us up, and taught us to say, 'Apsethus is a god.'" He let them fly to Libya. Upon which the Libyans burned Apsethus as an impostor. This is an old story told of Hanno the Carthaginian. — *Ælian*, Var. Hist., xiv. 30. Its introduction, and the stress laid upon it by Hippolytus, do not give a very high notion either of the learning or the fairness of the "Refuter of Heresies." But what is really curious and valuable in the work is the citations from the *ἀπόφασις μεγάλη* (the Great Announcement, the Scriptures, it may be called, of the Simonian sect). Of the existence of this book there can be no doubt. That it was written by the Simon Magus of the Acts, it were utter absurdity to suppose. It may have been the work of Dositheus or Menander, or of both of them, the true founders and inventors of Simonianism. Yet there can be no doubt that it was accepted by Hippolytus as the authentic work of Simon. The chaos of opinions which it discloses is almost inconceivable. Simon must have been well read in Plato and Aristotle, if not in Pythagoras (Hippolytus everywhere discerns the influence, almost the exclusive influence, of Greek philosophy). He quotes the poet Empedocles. His Helena (he also allegorized the wooden horse) is derived from Homer and Stesichorus. He is equally familiar with the Old Testament (among other points he holds fire to be the Primal God-

But Simon himself was at no time a Christian; neither was the heir and successor of his doctrines, Menander;¹ and it was not till it had made some

head: this he borrowed, according to Hippolytus, from the saying of Moses, "Our God is a consuming fire") and with the New: his Helena is the "lost sheep" of the Gospels. And we read the following strange parody, to our ears profane, on the great truths of Christianity: "As he had redeemed his Helena, so by his own wisdom (*ἐπεγνώσεως*, his Gnosis) he had brought salvation to the world. For the angels, through their ambition, having administered the world badly, he had come for the restoration of all things, metamorphosed and made equal to the Principalities and Powers, and to the Angels, so as to appear as a man, not being man, and to suffer seemingly in Judæa, though he did not suffer [with Bunsen, I erase the *καὶ*], and appeared to the Jews as the Son, in Samaria as the Father, among the Gentiles as the Holy Ghost. But he permitted himself to be called by any name by which men chose to call him. The prophets, he avers, altered their prophecies inspired by the angels who created the world [the evil Demiurge], whom therefore the believers in Simon and Helena do not regard, but assert their own perfect freedom. For they say that they are saved by his grace [the grace of Simon]." (Bunsen, by one of his arbitrary decisions, to my judgment in contradiction to the whole text, supposes all this to be the Simonian description of our Saviour, Jesus, not that of Simon.)

Indeed, the most remarkable part of this doctrine is its strong opposition to that of the Clementine Homilies. Here throughout Simon is the Saviour; he is the Christ, He that hath stood, that stands, that will stand (Hippolytus would show that he is not the Saviour), *ὅτι χριστὸς οὐκ ἦν Σίμων, ὁ ἐστὸς, σὰς, στηρόμενος*, p. 162.

In the Acts we read that Simon's followers said, "This man is the great Power of God" (*δυνάμις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ μεγάλη*); and, according to all this system, the great Power was the efflux of the Ineffable, Unapproachable, Unknown Godhead, the Redeemer of the materialized souls of men. In the Clementines he is the antagonist of St. Peter. Even in his end, there is a singular peculiarity in the fable. Here, too, in Rome, he is opposed to St. Peter. But instead of attempting to fly, as in the vulgar tradition (Apost. Const. vi. 9), and falling and breaking his neck, Simon offered to be buried alive, and declared that he would rise again on the third day. His disciples buried him in a deep trench; "but to this day," says Hippolytus, "they await his resurrection."

Neander dismisses Simon and the Simonians almost with contempt. The Philosophumena, I think, show that I am right in attaching more importance to these doctrines, as an early source and manifestation of Gnostic opinions.

¹ Menander baptized in his own name, being sent by the *Supreme Power of God*. His baptism conferred a resurrection not only to eternal life, but to eternal youth. An opinion, as M. Matter justly observes, not easily reconcilable to those who considered the body the unworthy prison of the soul. — Irenæus, i. 21. Matter; i. 219.

progress in the Syrian and Asiatic cities, that Christianity came into closer contact with those Gnostic or pre-Gnostic systems, which, instead of opposing it with direct hostility, received it with more insidious veneration, and warped it into an unnatural accordance with their own principles. As the Jew watched the appearance of Jesus, and listened to his announcement as the Messiah, in anxious suspense, expecting that even yet He would assume those attributes of temporal grandeur and visible majesty which, according to his conceptions, were inseparable from the true Messiah; as, even after the death of Jesus, the Jewish Christians still eagerly anticipated his immediate return to judgment, his millennial reign, and his universal dominion,—so many of the Oriental speculators, as soon as Christianity began to be developed, hailed it as the completion of their own wild theories, and forced it into accordance with their universal tenet of distinct intelligences emanating from the primal Being. Thus Christ, who to the vulgar Jew was to be a temporal king, to the Cabalist or the Chaldean, or to men of kindred opinions, became a Sephiroth, an *Æon*, an emanation from the one Supreme. While the author of the religion remained on earth, and while the religion itself was still in its infancy, Jesus was in danger of being degraded into a King of the Jews; his Gospel, of becoming the code of a new religious republic.¹

Gnosticism
connects
itself with
Christianity.

¹ The Ebionites of Neander. Neander's chapter on the Ebionites and Nazarenes is excellent. I acquiesce in his explanation of Ebion (from the Hebrew word עֲבִיּוֹן, the poor); but instead of taking the word, as Origen did, in his allegoric vein, as a contemptuous appellation from their poverty of doctrine, I would suppose that these refugees who fled during the war of Titus and the war of Hadrian, and stole back to Jerusalem, were poor as compared with the Gentile Christians, and the earlier Christians of Palestine addressed by St. James in his Epistle, "Go to now, ye rich men."

Directly it got beyond the borders of Palestine, and the name of Christ had acquired sanctity and veneration in the Eastern cities, he became a kind of metaphysical impersonation, while the religion lost its purely moral cast, and assumed the character of a speculative theogony.

Ephesus is the scene of the first collision between Christianity and Orientalism of which we can trace any authentic record. Ephesus I have Ephesus. before described as the great emporium of magic arts, and the place where the unwieldy allegory of the East lingered in the bosom of the more elegant Grecian humanism.¹ Here the Greek, the Oriental, the Jew, the philosopher, the magician, the follower of John the Baptist, the teacher of Christianity, were no doubt encouraged to settle by the peaceful opulence of the inhabitants, and the constant influx of strangers, under the proudly indifferent protection of the municipal authorities and of the Roman Government. In Ephesus, according to universal tradition, survived the last of the apostles; and here the last of St. John. the Gospels — some have supposed, I think rightly, the latest of the writings of the New Testament — appeared in the midst of this struggle with the foreign elements of conflicting systems. This Gospel was written, I conceive, not against any peculiar His Gospel. sect or individual, but to arrest the spirit of Orientalism, which was working into the essence of Christianity, destroying its beautiful simplicity, and threatening altogether to change both its design and its effects upon mankind. In some points, it neces

¹ The Temple of Diana was the triumph of pure Grecian architecture; but her statue was not that of the divine Huntress, like that twin sister of the Belvidere Apollo in the gallery at Paris: she was the Diana multimamma, the emblematic impersonation of All-productive, All-nutritive Nature.

sarily spoke the language, which was common alike, though not precisely with the same meaning, to the Platonism of the West and the Theogonism of the East. But how different and peculiar its sense! It kept the moral and religious, if not altogether distinct from the physical notions, yet clearly and invariably predominant. While it appropriated the well-known and almost universal term, the Logos, or Word of God, to the divine author of Christianity,¹ and even adopted some of the imagery from the hypothesis of conflicting light and darkness; yet it altogether rejected all the wild cosmogonical speculations on the formation of the world: it was silent on that elementary distinction of the Eastern creed, the separation of matter from the ethereal mind. The union of the soul with the Deity, though in the writings of John it takes something of a mystic tone, is not the Pantheistic absorption into the parent Deity: it is an union by the aspiration of the pious heart, the conjunction by pure and holy love with the Deity, who, to the ecstatic moral affection of the adorer, is himself pure love. It insists not on abstraction from matter, but from sin, from hatred, from all fierce and corrupting passions: its new life is active as well as meditative; a social principle, which incorporates together all pure and holy men, and conjoins them with their federal head, Christ, the image and representative of the God of love: it is no principle of isolation in solitary and rapturous meditation; it is a moral, not an imaginative purity.

Among the opponents to the holy and sublime Christianity of St. John, during his residence at Ephesus, the names of the Nicolaitans and of Cerinthus alone have survived.² Of the

Nicolaitans.

¹ Compare Burton (Bampton Lectures), who fully admits this.

² General tradition derived the Nicolaitans from Nicolas, one of the seven

tenets of the former, and the author of the doctrine, nothing precise is known; but the indignant language with which they are alluded to in the Sacred Writings implies, that they were not merely hostile to the abstract doctrines, but also to the moral effects of the Gospel. Nor does it appear quite clear that the Nicolaitans were a distinct and organized sect.

Cerinthus was the first, of whose tenets we have any distinct statement, who, admitting the truth of Christianity, attempted to incorporate with ^{Cerinthus.} it foreign and Oriental tenets.¹ Cerinthus was of Jewish descent, and educated in the Judæo-Platonic school of Alexandria.² His system was a singular and apparently incongruous fusion of Jewish, Christian, and Oriental notions. He did not, like Simon or Menander, invest himself in a sacred and mysterious character, though he pretended to angelic revelations.³ Like all the Orientals, his imagination was haunted with the notion of the malignity of matter; and his object seems to have been to keep both the primal Being and the Christ uninfected with its contagion.

deacons, Acts vi. 5. Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. l. iii. c. 29) relates a story, that Nicolas, accused of being jealous of his beautiful wife, offered her in matrimony to whoever chose to take her. His followers, on this example, founded the tenet of promiscuous concubinage. Wetstein, with whom Michaelis and Rosenmüller are inclined to agree, supposed that Nicolas was a translation of the Hebrew word Bileam, both signifying, in their respective languages, the subduer or the destroyer of the people. Michaelis, Eichhorn, and Storr suppose, therefore, that it was the name rather of a sect than an individual, and the same with those mentioned in 2 Pet. ii. 10, 13, 18; iii. 3; Jude 8, 16. See Rosenmüller on Rev. ii. 6. The Philosophumena takes the popular view of the Nicolaitans from Nicolas the deacon: it is precisely the same view and in the same words with Irenæus.

¹ See Mosheim, De Rebus ante C. M. p. 199. Matter, i. 221.

² Theodoret, ii. c. 3. This is expressed by the Philosophumena. It confirms also Neander's ingenious connection of the tenets with those of Philo.

³ Eusebius, E. H. iii. 28, from Caius the presbyter, *τερατολογίας ἡμῖν ὡς δι' ἀγγέλων αὐτῷ δεδειγμένas ψευδόμενος*.

The Creator of the material world, therefore, was a secondary being,—an angel or angels; as Cerinthus seems to have adhered to the Jewish, and did not adopt the Oriental language.¹ But his national and hereditary reverence for the Law withheld him from that bold and hostile step which was taken by most of the other Gnostic sects, to which, no doubt, the general animosity to the Jews in Syria and Egypt concurred,—the identification of the God of the Jewish covenant with the inferior and malignant author of the material creation. He retained, according to one account, his reverence for the rites, the ceremonies, the Law, and the Prophets² of Judaism, to which he was probably reconciled by the allegoric interpretations of Philo. The Christ, in his theory, was of a higher order than those secondary and subordinate beings who had presided over the older world. But, with the jealousy of all the Gnostic sects, lest the pure Emanation from the Father should be unnecessarily contaminated by too intimate a conjunction with a material and mortal form, he relieved him from the degradation of a human birth, by supposing that the Christ above descended on the man Jesus at his baptism; and from the ignominy of a mortal death, by making him re-ascend before that crisis, having accomplished his mission of making known “the Unknown Father,” the pure and primal Being, of whom the worshippers of the Creator of the material universe, and of the Jehovah of the Jews, were alike ignorant. But the most inconsequential part of the doctrine of Cerinthus was his retention of the Jew-

¹ Epiphaniæ Hær. viii. 28. According to Irenæus, “a virtute quadam valdè separatâ, et distante ab eâ principalitate quæ est super universa et ignorante eum qui est super omnia Deum.” — Iren., i. 25.

² Inferior angels to those of the Law inspired the prophets.

ish doctrine of the millennium. It must, indeed, have been purified from some of its grosser and more sensual images; for the Christos, the immaterial Emanation from the Father, was to preside during its long period of harmony and peace.¹

The later Gnostics were bolder but more consistent innovators on the simple scheme of Christianity. It was not till the second century Later
Gnostics. that the combination of Orientalism with Christianity was matured into the more perfect Gnosticism. This was, perhaps, at its height from about the year 120 to 140. In all the great cities of the East, in which Christianity had established its most flourishing communities, sprang up this rival, which aspired to a still higher degree of knowledge than was revealed in the Gospel, and boasted that it soared almost as much above the vulgar Christianity as above the vulgar Paganism. Antioch, where the first church of the Christians had been opened, beheld the followers of Saturninus withdrawing, in a proud assurance of their superiority, from the common brotherhood of believers, and insulating themselves as the gifted possessors of still higher spiritual secrets. Edessa, whose king very early Christian fable had exalted into a personal correspondent with the Saviour, rang with the mystic hymns of Bardesanes; to the countless religious and philosophical factions of Alexandria were added those of Basilides and Valentinus; until a still more unscrupulous and ardent enthusiast, Marcion of Pontus, threw aside in disdain the whole existing religion of the Gospel, remodelled the sacred books, and estab-

¹ Cerinthus was considered by some early writers the author of the Apocalypse, because that work appeared to contain his grosser doctrine of the millennial reign of Christ. — Dionysius apud Euseb., iii. 282, vii. 25.

lished himself as the genuine hierophant of the real Christian mysteries.

Gnosticism, though very different from Christianity

The primal Deity of Gnosticism. was of a sublime and imposing character as an imaginative creed, and not more unreasonable than the other attempts of human reason to solve the inexplicable secret, the origin of evil. Though variously modified, the systems of the different teachers were essentially the same. The primal Deity remained aloof in his unapproachable majesty; the Unspeakable, the Ineffable, the Nameless, the Self-existing.¹ The Pleroma, the fulness of the

The Pleroma. Godhead, expanded itself in still outspreading circles, and approached, till it comprehended, the universe. From the Pleroma emanated all spiritual being, and to the Pleroma all such being was to return and mingle again in indissoluble unity. By their entanglement in malign and hostile matter,—the source of moral as well as physical evil,—all outwardly existing beings had degenerated from their high origin: their redemption from this foreign bondage, their restoration to purity and peace in the bosom of Divinity, the universal harmony of all immaterial existence, thus resolved again into the Pleroma, was the merciful design of the Æon

The Æon Christ. Christ, who had for this purpose invaded and subdued the foreign and hostile provinces of the presiding Energy, or Deity, of matter.

In all the Oriental sects, this primary principle, the malignity of matter, haunted the imagination; and

¹ The author of the Apostolic Constitutions asserts, as the first principle of all the early heresies, τὸν μὲν παντοκράτορα Θεὸν βλασφημεῖν, ἀγνωστον δοξάζειν, καὶ μὴ εἶναι Πατέρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μηδὲ τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργόν. ἀλλ' ἄλεκτον, ἄβρητον, ἀκατονόμαστον, αὐτογένηθλον. — Lib. vi. c. 10.

to this principle every tenet must be accommodated. The sublimest doctrines of the Old Testament — the creative omnipotence, the sovereignty, the providence of God, as well as the grosser and anthropomorphic images, in which the acts and passions and even the form of man are assigned to the Deity — fell under the same remorseless proscription. It was pollution, it was degradation to the pure and elementary spirit, to mingle with, to approximate, to exercise even the remotest influence over, the material world. The creation of the visible universe was made over, according to all, to a secondary, with most to a hostile, Demiurge. The hereditary reverence which had modified the opinions of Cerinthus, with regard to the Jehovah of his fathers, had no hold on the Syrian and Egyptian speculatists. They fearlessly pursued their system to its consequences, and the whole of the Old Testament was abandoned to the inspiration of an inferior and evil demon: the Jews were left in exclusive possession of their national Deity, whom the Gnostic Christians dis-
Malignity of matter.
Rejection of the Old Testament.
dained to acknowledge as bearing any resemblance to the abstract, remote, and impassive Spirit. To them the mission of Christ revealed a Deity altogether unknown in the dark ages of a world which was the creation and the domain of an inferior being. They would not, like the philosophizing Jews, take refuge in allegory to explain the too material images of the works of the Deity in the act of creation, and his subsequent rest; the intercourse with man in the garden of Eden; the trees of knowledge and of life; the serpent, and the fall. They rejected the whole, as altogether extraneous to Christianity, belonging to another world, with which the God revealed by

Christ had no concern or relation. If they condescended to discuss the later Jewish history, it was merely to confirm their preconceived notions. The apparent investiture of the Jehovah with the state and attributes of a temporal sovereign, the imperfection of the Law, the barbarity of the people, the bloody wars in which they were engaged; in short, whatever in Judaism was irreconcilable with a purely intellectual and morally perfect system,—argued its origin from an imperfect and secondary author.

But some tenets of primitive Christianity came no less into direct collision with the leading principles of Orientalism. The human nature of Jesus was too deeply impressed upon all the Gospel history, and perplexed the whole school, as well the precursors of Gnosticism as the more perfect Gnostics. His birth and death bore equal evidence to the unspiritualized materialism of his mortal body. The Gnostics seized with avidity the distinction between the divine and human nature; but the Christ, the *Æon*, which emanated from the pure and primal Deity, as yet unknown in the world of the inferior creator, must be relieved as far as possible from the degrading and contaminating association with the mortal Jesus. The simpler hypothesis of the union of the two natures, mingled too closely, according to their views, the ill-assorted companions. The human birth of Jesus, though guarded by the virginity of his mother, was still offensive to their subtler and more fastidious purity. The Christ, therefore, the Emanation from the Pleroma, descended upon the man Jesus at his baptism. The death of Jesus was a still more serious cause of embarrassment. They seem never to have entertained the notion of an

Of some
parts of
the New.

expiatory sacrifice; and the connection of the ethereal mind with the pains and sufferings of a carnal body was altogether repulsive to their strongest prejudices. Before the death, therefore, of Jesus, the Christ had broken off his temporary association with the perishable body of Jesus, and surrendered it to the impotent resentment of Pilate and of the Jews; or, according to the theory of the Docetæ, adopted by almost all the Gnostic sects, the whole union with the material human form was an illusion upon the senses of men; it was but an apparent human being, an impassive phantom, which *seemed* to undergo all the insults and the agony of the cross.

Such were the general tenets of the Gnostic sects, emanating from one simple principle. But the details of their cosmogony, their philosophy, and their religion, were infinitely modified by local circumstances, by the more or less fanciful genius of their founders, and by the stronger infusion of the different elements of Platonism, Cabalism, or that which, in its stricter sense, may be called Orientalism. The number of circles or emanations or procreations which intervened between the spiritual and the material world; the nature and the rank of the Creator of that material world; his more or less close identification with the Jehovah of Judaism; the degree of malignity which they attributed to the latter; the office and the nature of the Christos,—these were open points, upon which they admitted, or, at least, assumed, the utmost latitude.

The earliest of the more distinguished Gnostics is Saturninus, who is represented as a pupil of Menander, the successor of Simon Magus.¹ Saturninus

¹ On Saturninus, see Irenæus, i. 22; Euseb., iv. 7; Epiphan., Hær. 23.

But this Samaritan sect was always in direct hostility with Christianity, while Saturninus departed less from the Christian system than most of the wilder and more imaginative teachers of Gnosticism. The strength of the Christian party in Antioch may in some degree have overawed and restrained the aberrations of his fancy. Saturninus did not altogether exclude the primal spiritual Being from all concern or interest in the material world. For the Creator of the visible universe, he assumed the seven great angels (which the later Jews had probably borrowed, though with different powers, from the seven Amschaspands of Zoroastrianism) or rather the chief of these seven, who was the God of the Jews. Neither were these angels essentially evil, nor was the domain on which they exercised their creative power altogether surrendered to the malignity of matter: it was a kind of debatable ground between the powers of evil and of good. The historian of Gnosticism has remarked the singular beauty of the fiction regarding the creation of man. "The angels tried their utmost efforts to form man; but there arose under their creative influence only 'a worm creeping upon the earth.' God, condescending to interpose, sent down his Spirit, which breathed into the reptile the living soul of man." It is not quite easy to connect with this view of the origin of man the tenets of Saturninus, that human kind was divided into two distinct races, the good and the bad. Whether the latter became so from receiving a feebler and less influential portion of the Divine Spirit, or whether they were a subse-

Theodoret, *Hær. Fab. lib. iii.*; Tertullian, *De Animâ*, 23; *De Præscrip. cont. Hær. c. 46.* Of the moderns, Mosheïm, p. 336; Matter, i. 276. He lived under Hadrian.

quent creation of Satan, who assumes the station of the Ahriman of the Persian system, does not clearly appear.¹ But the descent of Christ was to separate finally these two conflicting races. He was to rescue the good from the predominant power of the wicked; to destroy the kingdom of the spirits of evil, who, emanating in countless numbers from Satan their chief, waged a fatal war against the good; and to elevate them far above the power of the chief of the angels, the God of the Jews, for whose imperfect laws were to be substituted the purifying principles of asceticism, by which the children of light were reunited to the source and origin of light. The Christ himself was the Supreme Power of God, immaterial, incorporeal, formless, but assuming the *semblance* of man; and his followers were, as far as possible, to detach themselves from their corporeal bondage, and assimilate themselves to his spiritual being. Marriage was the invention of Satan and his evil spirits, or, at best, of the great Angel, the God of the Jews, in order to continue the impure generation. The elect were to abstain from propagating a race of darkness and imperfection. Whether Saturninus, with the Essenes, maintained this total abstinence as the especial privilege of the higher class of his followers, and permitted to the less perfect the continuation of their kind, or whether he abandoned altogether this perilous and degrading office to the wicked, his system appears incomplete, as it seems to yield up as desperate the greater part of the human race; to perpetuate the dominion of evil; and to

¹ The latter opinion is that of Mosheim. M. Matter, on the contrary, says "Satan n'a pas pourtant créé ces hommes, il les a trouvés tout faits, il s'en est emparé; c'est là sa sphère d'activité et la limite de sa puissance." — t. i. p. 285

want the general and final absorption of all existence into the purity and happiness of the primal Being.

Alexandria, the centre, as it were, of the speculative and intellectual activity of the Roman world, to which ancient Egypt, Asia, Palestine, and Greece furnished the mingled population of her streets and the conflicting opinions of her schools, gave birth to the two succeeding and most widely disseminated sects of Gnosticism, — those of Basilides and Valentinus.

Basilides was a Syrian by birth, and by some is supposed to have been a scholar of Menander, at the same time with Saturninus. He claimed, however, Glaucias, a disciple of St. Peter, as his original teacher; and his doctrines assumed the boastful title of the Secret Traditions of the great Apostle.¹ He also had some ancient prophecies, those of Cham and Barkaph,² peculiar to his sect. According to another authority, he was a Persian; but this may have originated from the Zoroastrian cast of his primary tenets.³ From the Zendavesta, Basilides drew the eternal hostility of mind and matter, of light and darkness; but the Zoroastrian doctrine seems to have accommodated itself to the kindred systems of Egypt. In fact, the Gnosticism of Basilides appears to have been a fusion of the ancient sacerdotal religion of Egypt with the angelic and demoniac theory of Zoroaster.⁴ Basilides did not, it seems, maintain his one

¹ According to the *Philosophumena*, the Basilidians professed to derive their doctrines from the apostle Matthias.

² Irenæus differs, in his view of the Basilidian theory, from the remains of the Basilidian books appealed to by Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* vi. p. 375, 795; Theodoret, *Hæret. Fabul.* 1, 2; Euseb., *E. H.* iv. 7. Basilides published twenty-four volumes of *Exegetica*, or interpretations of his doctrines.

³ Clemens Alex., *Stromata*, vi. 642. Euseb., *H. E.* iv. 7.

⁴ The *Philosophumena* enters at some length into the doctrines of Basi

abstract unapproachable Deity far above the rest of the universe, but connected him, by a long and insensible gradation of intellectual developments or manifestations, with the visible and material world. From the Father proceeded seven beings, who together with him made up an ogdoad; constituted the first scale of intellectual beings; and inhabited the highest heaven, the purest intellectual sphere. According to their names, — Mind, Reason, Intelligence (*Φρόνησις*), Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Peace, — they are merely, in our language, the attributes of the Deity, impersonated in this system.

The number of these primary Æons is the same as the Persian system of the Deity and the seven Am-schaspands, and the Sephiroth of the Cabala, and probably, as far as that abstruse subject is known, of the ancient Egyptian theology.¹

The seven primary effluxes of the Deity went on producing and multiplying, each forming its own realm or sphere, till they reached the number of 365.²

lides, and has, seemingly, many citations from his writings. Hippolytus, as is his wont, traces the origin of them to the Greek philosopher. According to the *Philosophumena*, the primal Deity was so absolutely secluded from all beings as himself to cease to be a being. Basilides went on in his negation till he denied the existence of God. It is a strange passage, which Bunsen seems to me to have eluded: 'Επεὶ οὐδὲν ἦν, οὐχ ὄληρ, οὐκ οὐσία, οὐκ ἀνούσιον, οὐχ ἀπλοῦν, οὐ σύνθετον, οὐ νοητὸν, οὐκ ἀναισθητὸν, οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, οὐκ ἄγγελος, οὐ θεὸς, οὐδὲ ὅλως τι τῶν ὀνομαζόμενων ἢ δι' αἰσθήσεως λαμβανόμενων ἢ νοητῶν πραγμάτων, ἀλλ' οὕτω λεπτομεροτέρως πάντων ἀπλῶς περιγεγραμμένων, οὐκ ὦν θεὸς

(ὃν Ἀριστοτέλης καλεῖ νόησιν νοήσεως, οὗτοι δὲ οὐκ ὄντα)

ἀνοήτως, ἀναισθητῶς, ἀβούλως, ἀπροαρέτως, ἀπαθῶς, ἀνεπιθυμήτως κόσμον ἠθέλησε τοῖσιν (p. 58, in Bunsen's *Analecta*). The first seems to have been a purely intellectual or metaphysical evolution. But this Being, or no Being, contained within itself the seed of the whole universe, the Cosmos.

¹ See Matter, vol. ii. p. 5-37.

² It is difficult to suppose, that this number, either as originally borrowed from the Egyptian theology or as invented by Basilides, had not some astro-

The total number formed the mystical Abraxas,¹ the legend which is found on so many of the ancient gems, the greater part of which are of Gnostic origin; though as much of this theory was from the doctrines of ancient Egypt, not only the mode of expressing their tenets by symbolic inscriptions, but even the inscription itself, may be originally Egyptian.² The

nomical reference. All this, observes Bunsen, is merely the mythological form of psychologic speculation, based upon the simple words of the Prologue and coupled with the imaginary astronomy of the ancient world. Bunsen goes on to describe exceedingly well the next process, according to the Philosophumena: "It is stated in our extracts, that the words, 'Let there be light,' produced the germ or seed of the world, which, adds Basilides, is the light that came into the world (John i.). The beauty of divine goodness attracts the element of life in matter; this divine element Basilides calls the Sonship. There are three classes of Sonship. The most refined element flies by its own nature up to the Ineffable Father; the second Sonship uses the Holy Spirit as a wing, but rises by its assistance to the paternal glory, from whence the Holy Spirit, being repulsed by the Ineffable (and attracted by matter), sinks into an intermediate state below the Ineffable (purely intellectual), but still above this earth (the mere psychical or animal). The essence of the life of this earth is concentrated in the Demiurgos, or Spirit of the material world, whose Son (conscious realization?) is much more elevated than himself. This material world in its brute resistance, in its blind hostility to the divine formative and limiting power is the evil principle." — Christianity and Mankind, vol. i. p. 18. In the original, of which this is the summary, there is much grace and fancy of imagery; but how far are we from the simplicity of the Gospel, even from that part of St. John which borders most closely on the mystic?

¹ Irenæus, i. 23. See in M. Matter (ii. 49, 54) the countless interpretations of this mysterious word. We might add others to those collected by his industry. M. Matter adopts, though with some doubt, the opinion of M. Bellerman and M. Munter. "Le premier de ces écrivains explique le mot d'Abraxas par le kopte, qui est incontestablement à l'ancienne langue d'Égypte ce que la grec moderne est au langage de l'ancienne Grèce. La syllable *sadsch*, que les Grecs ont dû convertir en *σαξ*, ou *σας*, ou *σαζ*, n'ayant pu exprimer la dernière lettre de cette syllable, que par les lettres X, Σ, ou Z, signifierait parole, et abrak *béni, saint, adorable*, en sorte que le mot d'Abraxas tout entier offrirait le sens de *parole sacrée*. M. Munter ne s'éloigne de cette interprétation, que pour les syllables *abrak* qu'il prend pour le mot kopte 'berra,' *nouveau*, ce qui donne à l'ensemble le sens de *parole nouveau*." — Matter, ii. 40.

² See, in the supplement to M. Matter's work, a very curious collection of these Egyptian and Egypto-Grecian medals; and a work of Dr. Walsh

lowest of these worlds bordered on the realm of matter. On this confine the first confusion and invasion of the hostile elements took place. At length the chief angel of this sphere, on the verge of intellectual being, was seized with a desire of reducing the confused mass to order. With his assistant angels, he became the Creator. Though the form was of a higher origin, it was according to the idea of Wisdom, who, with the Deity, was part of the first and highest Ogdoad. Basilides professed the most profound reverence for Divine Providence; and, in Alexandria, the God of the Jews, softened off, as it were, and harmonized to the philosophic sentiment by the school of Philo, was looked upon in a less hostile light than by the Syrian and Asiatic school. The East lent its system of guardian angels, and the assistant angels of the Demiurge were the spiritual rulers of the nations, while the Creator himself was that of the Jews. Man was formed of a triple nature,—his corporeal form of brute and malignant matter; his animal soul, the Psychic principle, which he received from the Demiurge; the higher and purer spirit, with which he was endowed from a loftier region. This pure and ethereal spirit was to be emancipated from its impure companionship; and Egypt, or rather the whole East, lent the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, in order to carry this stranger upon earth through the gradations of successive purification, till it was readmitted to its parent heaven.

Basilides, in the Christian doctrine which he interwove with this imaginative theory, followed the usual Gnostic course.¹ The Christ, the first *Æon* of the

on these coins. Compare, likewise, Reuven's *Lettres à M. Letronne*, particularly p. 23.

¹ Irenæus, i 29, compared with the other authors cited above

Deity, descended on the man Jesus at his baptism; but, by a peculiar tenet of their own, the Basilidians rescued even the man Jesus from the degrading sufferings of the cross. Simon the Cyrenian was changed into the form of Jesus; on him the enemies of the Crucified wasted their wrath, while Jesus stood aloof in the form of Simon, and mocked their impotent malice. Their moral perceptions must have been singularly blinded by their passion for their favorite tenet, not to discern how much they lowered their Saviour by making Him thus render up an innocent victim as his own substitute.

Valentinus appears to have been considered the most formidable and dangerous of this school of Gnostics.¹ He was twice excommunicated, and twice received again into the bosom of the Church. He did not confine his dangerous opinions to the school of Alexandria: he introduced the wild Oriental speculations into the more peaceful West; taught at Rome; and, a third time being expelled from the Christian society, retired to Cyprus,—an island where the Jews were formerly numerous till the fatal insurrection in the time of Hadrian, and where probably the Oriental philosophy might not find an unwelcome reception, on the border, as it were, of Europe and Asia.²

Valentinus annihilated the complexity of pre-existing heavens, which perhaps connected the system of Basilides with that of ancient Egypt, and did not interpose

¹ Irenæus, Hær. v. Clemens. Alex., Strom. Origen, De Princip. contra Celsum. The author of the Didascalia Orientalis, at the end of the works of Clement of Alexandria. Tertullian adversus Valentin. Theodoret, Fab. Hær. i. 7. Epiphanius, Hær. 31. Philosophumena, p. 177, *et seqq.* Bunsen's Analecta, vol. i. p. 79-96.

² Tertull. advers. Valentin., c. 4. Epiphan. Massuet. (Diss. in Iren. p. x. 14) doubts this part of the History of Valentinus.

the same infinite number of gradations between the primal Deity and the material world. He descended much more rapidly into the sphere of Christian images and Christian language; or, rather, he carried up many of the Christian notions and terms, and enshrined them in the Pleroma, the region of spiritual and inaccessible light. The fundamental tenet of Orientalism, the Incomprehensibility of the Great Supreme, was the essential principle of his system, and was represented in terms pregnant with mysterious sublimity. The first Father, the Monad, was called Bythos, the Abyss, the Depth, the Unfathomable, who dwelt alone in inscrutable and ineffable height, with his own first Conception, his Ennoia, who bore the emphatic and awful name of Silence.¹ The first development took place after endless ages, in which the Unfathomable dwelt in his majestic solitude, but he found not delight in his solitude. Love was his motive. Love must have an object,—something to love.² This development or self-manifestation was Mind (Nous), whose appropriate consort was Aletheia, or Truth. These formed the first great quaternion, the highest scale of being. From Mind and Truth proceeded the Word and Life (Logos and Zöe): their manifestations were Man and the Church, Anthropos and Ecclesia; and so the first ogdoad was complete. From the Word and Life proceeded ten more Æons: but these seem, from their names, rather qualities of the Supreme; at least

¹ According to Hippolytus (vi. 29–30), the strict Valentinians did not allow that Sigè was to be reckoned as Sizygos, but they maintained that Bythos alone produced the Æons; and this appears to have been the doctrine of Valentinus. Rossel's *Picture of the Valentinian System*. Bunsen, i. 143.

² Φιλέρημος γὰρ οὐκ ἦν. Ἀγάπη γὰρ, φησὶν, ἦν ὁλος, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγάπη, ἐὰν μὴ ἡ τὸ ἀγαπῶμενον.—*Philosophumena*, p. 184. Hippolytus traces all Valentinianism to Pythagoras and the Timæus of Plato.

the five masculine names, for the feminine appear to imply some departure from the pure elementary and unimpassioned nature of the primal Parent. The males are, — Buthios, profound, with his consort Mixis, conjunction ; Ageratos, that grows not old, with Henosis, or union ; Autophyes, self-subsistent, with Hedone, pleasure ; Akinetos, motionless, with Syncrasis, commixture ; the Only-begotten and Blessedness. The offspring of Man and the Church were twelve, and in the females we seem to trace the shadowy prototypes of the Christian graces, — the Paraclete and Faith ; the Paternal and Hope ; the Maternal and Charity ; the Ever-intelligent and Prudence ; Ecclesiasticos (a term apparently expressive of church union) and Eternal Happiness ; Will and Wisdom (Theletos and Sophia).

These thirty Æons dwelt alone within the sacred and inviolable circle of the Pleroma : they were all, in one sense, manifestations of the Deity, all purely intellectual, an universe apart. But the peace of this metaphysical hierarchy was disturbed ; and here we are presented with a noble allegory, which, as it were, brings these abstract conceptions within the reach of human sympathy. The last of the dodecarchy which sprang from Man and the Church was Sophia, or Wisdom. Without intercourse with her consort Will, Wisdom was seized with an irresistible passion for that knowledge and intimate union with the primal Father, the Unfathomable, which was the sole privilege of the first-born, Mind. She would comprehend the Incomprehensible : love was the pretext, but temerity the motive. Pressing onward under this strong impulse, she would have reached the remote sanctuary, and would finally have been absorbed into the primal Essence, had she not encountered Horus (the imper

sonated boundary between knowledge and the Deity). At the persuasion of this "limitary cherub" (to borrow Milton's words), she acknowledged the incomprehensibility of the Father, returned in humble acquiescence to her lowlier sphere, and allayed the passion begot of Wonder. But the harmony of the intellectual world was destroyed; a redemption, a restoration, was necessary; and (for now Valentinus must incorporate the Christian system into his own) from the first *Æon*, the divine Mind, proceeded Christ and the Holy Ghost. Christ communicated to the listening *Æons* the mystery of the imperishable nature of the Father, and their own procession from Him; the delighted *Æons* commemorated the restoration of the holy peace, by each contributing his most splendid gift to form Jesus, encircled with his choir of angels.¹

Valentinus did not descend immediately from his domain of metaphysical abstraction: he interposed an intermediate sphere between that and the material world. The desire or passion of Sophia, impersonated, became an inferior Wisdom; she was an outcast from the Pleroma, and lay floating in the dim and formless chaos without. The Christos in mercy gave her form and substance; she preserved, as it were, some fragrance of immortality. Her passion was still strong for higher things, for the light which she could not apprehend; and she incessantly attempted to enter the forbidden circle of the Pleroma, but was again

¹ Each *Æon* took the best that he possessed, and with these they formed a happy image to the praise of the Heavenly Father, who is also called Saviour (*Soter*), and Christos and Logos, and the Whole, because he bears within him the flower of every thing; and they surrounded him with ministering angels to be his companions. — Rossel in Bunsen, p. 149. According to Hippolytus (Bunsen adds in a note), this ideal Christ Jesus is also called Logos, but distinct from the Logos of the inmost divine sphere, called the heavenly Logos.

arrested by Horus, who uttered the mystic name of Jao. Sadly she returned to the floating elements of inferior being; she was surrendered to Passion, and with his assistance produced the material world. The tears which she shed, at the thought of her out-cast condition, formed the humid element; her smiles, when she thought of the region of glory, the light; her fears and her sorrows, the grosser elements. Christ descended no more to her assistance, but sent Jesus, the Paraclete, the Saviour, with his angels; and, with his aid, all substance was divided into material, animal, and spiritual. The spiritual, however, altogether emanated from the light of her divine assistant; the first formation of the animal (the Psychic) was the Demiurge, the Creator, the Saviour, the Father, the king of all that was consubstantial with himself, and, finally, the material of which he was only the Demiurge or Creator. Thus were formed the seven intermediate spheres, of which the Demiurge and his assistant angels (the seven again of the Persian system), with herself, made up a second Ogdoad, — the image and feeble reflection of the former; Wisdom representing the primal Parent; the Demiurge, the Divine Mind, though he was ignorant of his mother, more ignorant than Satan himself; the other sidereal angels, the rest of the Æons. By the Demiurge the lower world was formed.

Mankind consisted of three classes, — the spiritual, who are enlightened with the divine ray from Jesus; the animal or psychic, the offspring and kindred of the Demiurge; the material, the slaves and associates of Satan, the prince of the material world. They were represented, as it were, by Seth, Abel, and Cain. This organization or distribution of mankind harmo

nized with tolerable facility with the Christian scheme. But, by multiplying his spiritual beings, Valentinus embarrassed himself in the work of redemption or restoration of this lower and still degenerating world. With him, it was the Christos, or rather a faint image and reflection (for all his intelligences multiplied themselves by this reflection of their being), who passed through the material form of the Virgin, like water through a tube. It was Jesus who descended upon the Saviour at his baptism, in the shape of a dove; and Valentinus admitted the common fantastic theory with regard to the death of Jesus. At the final consummation, the latent fire would burst out (here Valentinus admitted the theory common to Zoroastrianism and Christianity), and consume the very scoria of matter; the material men, with their prince, would utterly perish in the conflagration. Those of the animal, the Psychic, purified by the divine ray imparted by the Redeemer, would, with their parent, the Demiurge, occupy the intermediate realm; there were the just men made perfect; while the great mother, Sophia, would at length be admitted into the Pleroma or intellectual sphere.

Gnosticism was pure poetry, and Bardesanes was the poet of Gnosticism.¹ For above two centuries, the hymns of this remarkable man, and those of his son Harmonius, enchanted the ears of

Barde. anes.

¹ Valentinus, according to Tertullian, wrote psalms (*De Carne Christi*, c. 20); his disciple Marcus explained his system in verse, and introduced the Æons as speaking. Compare Hahn, p. 26. Bardesanes wrote one hundred and fifty psalms, the number of those of David.

The reader who is curious to follow out a more complete development of Valentinianism may well consult the disquisition of Rossel (a promising pupil of Neander, who died early) in Bunsen, i. p. 142. It is, of course, far more full, perhaps occasionally fancifully full, than my outline, which, however, I think shows almost the essential perils of the doctrine.

the Syrian Christians, till they were expelled by the more orthodox raptures of Ephraem the Syrian. Among the most remarkable circumstances relating to Bardesanes, who lived at the court of Abgar, King of Edessa, was his inquiry into the doctrines of the ancient Gymnosophists of India, which thus connected, as it were, the remotest East with the great family of religious speculatists; yet the theory of Bardesanes was more nearly allied to the Persian or the Chaldean; and the language of his poetry was in that fervent and amatory strain which borrows the warmest metaphors of human passion to kindle the soul to divine love.¹

Bardesanes deserved the glory, though he did not suffer the pains, of martyrdom. Pressed by the philosopher Apollonius, in the name of his master, the emperor Verus, to deny Christianity, he replied, "I fear not death, which I shall not escape by yielding to the wishes of the emperor." Bardesanes had opposed with vigorous hostility the system of Marcion;² he afterwards appears to have seceded, or, outwardly conforming, to have aspired in private to become the head of another Gnostic sect, which, in contradistinction to those of Saturninus and Valentinus, may be called the Mesopotamian or Babylonian. With him, the primal Deity dwelt alone with his consort, his primary thought or conception. Their first offsprings, *Æons*, or Emanations, were Christ and the Holy Ghost, who, in his system, was feminine, and nearly allied to the *Sophia*, or Wisdom, of other theories; the four elements,—the dry earth and the water, the fire and

¹ Theodoret, *Hæret.* Fab. 209.

² According to Eusebius (*E. H.* v. 36), Bardesanes approached much nearer to orthodoxy, though he still "bore some tokens of the sable streams."

the air, — who make up the celestial Ogdoad. The Son and his partner, the Spirit or Wisdom, with the assistance of the elements, made the worlds, which they surrendered to the government of the seven planetary spirits and the sun and moon, the visible types of the primal union. Probably these, as in the other systems, made the second Ogdoad; and these, with other astral influences, borrowed from the Tsabatism of the region, the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the thirty-six Decani, as he called the rulers of the 360 days, governed the world of man. And here Bardesanes became implicated with the eternal dispute about destiny and freewill, on which he wrote a separate treatise, and which entered into and colored all his speculations.¹ But the Wisdom which was the consort of the Son was of an inferior nature to that which dwelt with the Father. She was the Sophia Achamoth; and, faithless to her spiritual partner, she had taken delight in assisting the Demiurge in the creation of the visible world: but, in all her wanderings and estrangement, she felt a constant and impassioned desire for perfect re-union with her first consort. He assisted her in her course of purification; revealed to her his more perfect light, on which she gazed with re-animating love; and the second wedding of these long-estranged powers, in the presence of the parent Deity, and all the Æons and angels, formed the subject of one of his most ardent and rapturous hymns. With her arose into the Pleroma those souls which partook of her celestial nature, and are rescued, by the descent of the Christ, according

¹ He seems to have had an esoteric and an exoteric doctrine. — Hahn, p. 22, on the authority of St. Ephrem. Compare Hahn, *Bardesanes Gnosticus Syrorum primus Hymnologus*. Much of this bears close analogy to *Valentinianism*.

to the usual Gnostic theory, from their imprisonment in the world of matter.

Yet all these theorists preserved some decent show of respect for the Christian faith, and aimed at an amicable reconciliation between their own wild theories and the simpler Gospel. It is not improbable that most of their leaders were actuated by the ambition of uniting the higher and more intellectual votaries of the older Paganism with the Christian community; the one by an accommodation with the Egyptian, the others with the Syrian or Chaldean, as, in later times, the Alexandrian school with the Grecian or Platonic Paganism; and expected to conciliate all who would not scruple to engraft the few tenets of Christianity which they preserved inviolate upon their former belief. They aspired to retain all that was dazzling, vast, and imaginative in the cosmogonical systems of the East, and rejected all that was humiliating or offensive to the common sentiment in Christianity. The Jewish character of the Messiah gave way to a purely immaterial notion of a celestial Redeemer; the painful realities of his life and death were softened off into fantastic appearances; they yet adopted as much of the Christian language as they could mould to their views, and even disguised or mitigated their contempt for, or animosity to, Judaism. But Marcion of Pontus¹ disclaimed all these conciliatory and temporizing measures, either with Pagan, Jew, or evangelic Christian.² With Marcion, all was hard, cold, implacable antagonism. At once a severe rationalist and a strong enthusiast, Marcion pressed the leading doctrine

Marcion of
Pontus.

¹ Marcion was son of the Bishop of Sinope.

² On Marcion, see chiefly the five books of Tertullian *adv. Marcion*; the *Historians of Heresies*, Irenæus, i. 27; Epiphanius, 42; Theodoret, i. 24; Origen *contra Cels.*; Clem. Alex., iii. 425; St. Ephrem, *Orat.* 14, p. 468.

of the malignity of matter to its extreme speculative and practical consequences. His Creator, his providential Governor, the God of the Jews, — weak, imperfect, inthrallled in matter, — was the opposite to the true God. The only virtue of men was the most rigid and painful abstinence. Marcion's doctrine interdicted all animal food but fish; it surpassed the most austere of the other Christian communities in its proscription of the amusements and pleasures of life; it rejected marriage, from hostility to the Demiurge, whose kingdom it would not increase by peopling it with new beings enslaved to matter, to glut death with food.¹ The fundamental principle of Marcion's doctrine was unfolded in his *Antitheses*, the *Contrasts*, in which he arrayed against each other the Supreme God and the Demiurge the God of the Jews, the old and New Testament, the Law and the Gospel.² The one was perfect, pure, beneficent, passionless; the other, though not unjust by nature, infected by matter, — subject to all the passions of man, — cruel, changeable: the New Testament, especially, as remodelled by Marcion, was holy, wise, amiable; the Old Testament, the Law, barbarous, inhuman, contradictory, and detestable. On the plundering of the Egyptians, on the massacre of the Canaanites, on every metaphor which ascribed the actions and sentiments of men to the Deity, Marcion

¹ ὃ δὴ λογῶ μὴ βουλόμενοι τὸν κόσμον τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ γενημένον συμπληροῦν, ἀπέχεσθαι γάμου βούλονται. — Clem. Alex., Strom. iii. 3. μηδὲ ἀντεισάγειν τῷ κόσμῳ δυστυχήσαντας ἑτέρους, μηδὲ ἐπιχορηγεῖν τῷ θανάτῳ τρόφην. — Ch. vi.

² "Opus ex contrarietatum oppositionibus, *Antitheses*, cognominatum, et ad separationem legis et evangelii coactum; qua duos Deos dividens, proinde diversos, alterum alterius instrumenti vel quod magis est usui dicere, *testamenti* ut exinde evangelio quoque secundum Antitheses credendo patrocinaretur." — Tertull. adv. Marc. iv. 1.

Marcion is accused by Rhodon, apud Euseb., H. E. v. 13, of introducing two principles, — the Zoroastrian theory.

enlarged with contemptuous superiority, and contrasted it with the tone of the Gospel. It was to rescue mankind from the tyranny of this inferior and hostile deity, that the Supreme manifested himself in Jesus Christ. This manifestation took place by his sudden appearance in the synagogue in Capernaum; for Marcion swept away with remorseless hand all the earlier incidents in the Gospels. But the Messiah which was revealed in Christ was directly the opposite to that announced by the prophets of the Jews, and of their God. He made no conquests; he was not the Immanuel; he was not the son of David; he came not to restore the temporal kingdom of Israel. His doctrines were equally opposed: he demanded not an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth, but, where one smote the right cheek, to turn the other; he demanded no sacrifices but that of the pure heart; he enjoined not the sensual and indecent practice of multiplying the species; he proscribed marriage. The God of the Jews, trembling for his authority, armed himself against the celestial invader of his territory: he succeeded, in the *seeming* execution of Christ upon the cross, who, by his death, rescued the souls of the true believers from the bondage of the Law; descended to the lower regions, where he rescued not the pious and holy patriarchs, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Jacob, Moses, David, or Solomon, — these were the adherents of the Demiurge or material creator, — but his implacable enemies, such as Cain and Esau. After the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven, the God of the Jews was to restore his subjects to their native land; and his temporal reign was to commence over his faithful but inferior subjects.¹

¹ I adhere to this somewhat harsher and less charitable summary of Mar

The Gospel of Marcion was that of St. Luke, adapted, by many omissions and some alterations, to his theory. Every allusion to, every metaphor from, marriage was carefully erased, and every passage amended or rejected which could in any way implicate the pure Deity with the material world.¹

These were the chief of the Gnostic sects; but they spread out into almost infinitely diversified subdivisions, distinguished by some peculiar tenet or usage. The Carpocratians were avowed Eclectics: they worshipped, as benefactors of the human race, the images of Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Jesus Christ, as well as that of their own founder. By this school were received, possibly were invented, many of the astrologic or theurgic books attributed to

Varieties of
Gnosticism

cionism. The milder view of Neander, in which he had mitigated or softened off its harder tones, has been carried by Bunsen almost to admiration. I cannot think that a mere exaggeration of the Anti-Judaizing Pauline doctrines could have goaded even Tertullian to such a fury of orthodox hatred. I am well aware that contemporary statements, when the writers are full of the passions of their times, are the worst authorities. But Tertullian wrote with the Antitheses, probably with Marcion's Gospel, before him. The fragment of Hippolytus throws no light on the question. Of all the positive paradoxes of my dear friend, I confess that none seems to me so entirely baseless as his ascription of the Epistle to Diognetus—that model of pure, simple, reasonable Christianity, which stands alone in that barren and fantastic age—to the youth of Marcion. I cannot conceive the writer of that Epistle ever having become the author of the Antitheses. But one who has really made such discoveries as Bunsen has in early Christian literature, may be indulged in some fancies.

¹ This Gospel has been put together, according to the various authorities, especially Tertullian, by M. Hahn. It is reprinted in the Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti, by Thilo, of which one volume only has appeared. Among the remarkable alterations of the Gospels which most strongly characterize his system, was that of the text so beautifully descriptive of the providence of God,—which “maketh his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust,” Matt. v. 45. The sun and the rain, those material elements, were the slaves only of the God of matter: the Supreme Deity might not defile himself with the administration of their blessings.—Tertull. adv. Marc., iv. 17. The exquisite Parable of the Prodigal Son was thrown out. The feast at the end accounts for its proscription.

Zoroaster and other ancient sages. The Jewish Scriptures were the works of inferior angels; of the Christian, they received only the Gospel of St. Matthew. The supreme, unknown, uncreated Deity was the Monad; the visible world was the creation, the domain, of inferior beings. But the Carpocratian system was much simpler, and, in some respects, rejecting generally the system of Æons, or Emanations, approached much nearer to Christianity than those of most of the other Gnostics. The contest of Jesus Christ, who was the son of Joseph, according to their system, was a purely moral one. Their scheme revived the Oriental notion of the pre-existence of the soul. The soul of Jesus had a clearer and more distinct reminiscence of the original knowledge (the Gnosis) and wisdom of their celestial state; and, by communicating these notions to mankind, elevated them to the same superiority over the mundane deities. This perfection consisted in faith and charity, perhaps likewise in the ecstatic contemplation of the Monad. Every thing except faith and charity,—all good works, all observances of human laws, which were established by mundane authority,—were exterior, and more than indifferent. Hence they were accused of recommending a community of property and of women,—inferences which would be drawn from their avowed contempt for all human laws. They were accused, probably without justice, of following out these speculative opinions into practice. Of all heretics, none have borne a worse name than the followers of Carpocrates and his son and successor, Epiphanes.¹

¹ I think that we may collect from Clement of Alexandria, that the community of women, in the Carpocratian system, was that of Plato. Clement insinuates that it was carried into practice. — Strom. iii. c. 2. According to Clement, the different sects, or sects of sects, justified their immoralities on

The Ophites¹ are, perhaps, the most perplexing of all these sects. It is difficult to ascertain whether the Serpent from which they took or received their name was a good or an evil spirit,—the Agatho-demon of the Egyptian mythology, or the Serpent of the Jewish and other Oriental schemes. With them, a quaternion seems to have issued from the primal Being, the Abyss, who dwelt alone with his Ennoia, or Thought. These were Christ and Sophia Achamoth, the Spirit and Chaos. The former of each of these powers was perfect, the latter imperfect. Sophia Achamoth, departing from the primal source of purity, formed Ialdabaoth, the Prince of Darkness, the Demiurge, an inferior, but not directly malignant, being,—the Satan, or Samaël, or Michael. The tutelar angel of the Jews was Ophis, the Serpent,—a reflection of Ialdabaoth. With others, the Serpent was the symbol of Christ himself,² and hence the profound abhorrence with which this obscure sect was beheld by the more orthodox Christians. In other respects, their opinions appear to have approximated more nearly to the common Gnostic form. At the intercession of Sophia, Christ descended on the man Jesus, to rescue the souls of men from the fury of the Demiurge, who had im-

different pleas. Some, the Prodician Gnostics, considered public prostitution a mystic communion; others, that all children of the primary or good Deity might exercise their regal privilege of acting as they pleased; some, the Antitactæ, thought it right to break the seventh commandment, because it was uttered by the evil Demiurge. But these were obscure sects, and possibly their adversaries drew these conclusions for them from their doctrines.—Strom. l. iii.

¹ Mosheim, p. 399, who wrote a particular dissertation on the Ophitæ, of which he distinguished two sects, a Jewish and a Christian.

² M. Matter conjectured that they had derived the notion of the beneficent serpent, the emblem or symbol of Christ, from the brazen serpent in the wilderness. Perhaps it was the Egyptian Agatho-demon. M. Matter's notion was right to a certain extent as to one sect of the Ophites, the Peratæ. See *Philosophumena*, p. 133.

prisoned them in matter: they ascended through the realm of the seven planetary angels.¹

Such, in its leading branches, was the Gnosticism of the East, which rivalled the more genuine Chris-

¹ On the Ophites alone, the Refutation of all Heresies promises to enlarge our knowledge; to me that promise has ended, on examination, in utter disappointment; it is darkness darkened, confusion worse confounded. Hippolytus devotes a whole book, which we have nearly perfect, to the tenets of four sects of Ophites. None of them agrees with what has been gathered from other sources, as appears from the text, which I leave unaltered. These sects are the Naassenes, the Peratæ, the Sethians, the Justinians. Through all these run some common notions, — the blending of intellectual, physical, moral conceptions; their perpetual impersonation; the evolution of the creative mind; the imprisonment of mind in matter, its emancipation from its bondage; the forcible blending-up of the Christian tenets concerning Christ and the Holy Ghost with these repugnant and discordant schemes. (The Serpent appears in all the four systems, but with a different character and office.) All delight in their triple form of thought, the intellectual (the νοερόν), the life (the ψυχικόν), the brute matter (the χουκόν).

The Naassenes are so called from the Hebrew word Nahash, a serpent; and from Nahash they strangely derived the Greek ναός, a temple. Temples being universally raised throughout the world showed the universality of Serpent-worship. With them the Serpent is the principle of moisture (ἡ ὑγραλή), as, with Thales the Milesian, the origin and source of all things. Their great characteristic is the constant labor to identify Christianity with the Secret of all the Pagan Mysteries, Phrygian, Samothracian, Eleusinian. There is a wild confusion of the orgiastic superstition which prevailed so widely through the Roman world, the worship of Cybele, with that of Christ.

The Peratæ were distinguished (they were Orientals) by a predominant infusion of astrological notions. With them the Serpent was a sort of Intermediate Being, the Son, the Word, between the Father, the primal Monad, and Matter. Καθέζεται οὖν μέσος τῆς ὕλης καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ υἱός, ὁ λόγος, ὁ ὄψις ἀεὶ κινούμενος πρὸς ἀκίνητον τὸν πατέρα καὶ κινουμένην τὴν ὕλην.

With the Sethians, the Serpent was the violent wind, which came out of darkness, the first-born of the waters, and the generating principle of all things, especially of man (p. 142).

With the Justinians (this sect, of course, has no relation with Justin Martyr) the Serpent approaches more nearly to his function in the beginning of the book of Genesis. But the seduction of Eve is in a coarser and grosser form (p. 155). The Serpent is also the Tempter of our Lord in the wilderness (p. 157).

I must say, that throughout this book there is too much of Hippolytus, of the writer of the third century, proud of his knowledge of the Greek religion

tianity, if not in the number of its converts, in the activity with which it was disseminated. It arose simultaneously or successively in all the great centres of Christianity,—in Alexandria, in Antioch, in Edessa, in Ephesus. Many of its teachers—Valentinus, Marcion, and their followers—found their way to Rome. Their progress was especially among the higher and more opulent; and, in their lofty pretensions, they claimed a superiority over the humbler Christianity of the vulgar. But, for this very reason, Gnos-
Gnosticism
not popular.
 ticism, in itself, was diametrically opposite to the true Christian spirit: instead of being popular and universal, it was select and exclusive. It was another, in one respect a higher, form of Judaism, inasmuch as it did not rest its exclusiveness on the title of birth, but on especial knowledge (gnosis), vouchsafed only to the enlightened and inwardly designated few. It was the establishment of the Christians as a kind of religious privileged order, a theophilosophic aristocracy, whose esoteric doctrines soared far above the grasp and comprehension of the

and the Greek philosophy. All these Ophites he would assume to be the earliest Gnostics (they first took the name), and so almost reaching up to the apostolic times. But it is utterly incredible that there should have existed at that time any set of men who were equally familiar with the Old and New Testaments and the Greek poets; who appealed to the Pentateuch and the Gospels, and to Homer, Pindar, Anacreon; who had anticipated the identification of Christianity with the Secret of the Pagan Mysteries, of which they might almost seem to be the Hierophants; who had their mystic hymns in which the new and the old, the Oriental and Greek and Christian notions, were blended and confused. Hippolytus appeals to, cites, their writings; but, of the age of those writings, I must presume to doubt his critical discernment.

Finally, I cannot think these smaller sects of any importance in Christian history, further than as testifying to that general fermentation of thought, that appetency for truth, that distressing and exciting want of satisfaction for the heart and soul and intellect of man, which Christianity found and stimulated to the utmost; from which it suffered to a certain extent, but from which it emerged, if not in all its primal purity, with unsubdued energy and force, by which it subjugated the world.

vulgar.¹ It was a philosophy rather than a religion; at least, the philosophic or speculative part would soon have predominated over the spiritual. They affected a profound and awful mystery; they admitted their disciples, in general, by slow and regular gradations. Gnostic Christianity, therefore, might have been a formidable antagonist to the prevailing philosophy of the times, but it would never have extirpated an ancient and deeply rooted religion; it might have drained the schools of their hearers, but it never would have changed the temples into solitudes. It would have affected only the surface of society; it did not begin to work upward from its depths, nor did it penetrate to that strong under-current of popular feeling and opinion which alone operates a profound and lasting change in the moral sentiments of mankind.

With regard to Paganism, the Gnostics are accused of a compromising and conciliatory spirit, Conciliatory towards Paganism. totally alien to that of primitive Christianity. They affected the haughty indifference of the philosophers of their own day, or the Brahmins of India, to the vulgar idolatry; scrupled not at a contemptuous conformity with the established worship; attended the rites and the festivals of the Heathen; partook of meats offered in sacrifice; and, secure in their own intellectual or spiritual purity, conceived that no stain could cleave to their uninfected spirits from this, which, to most Christians, appeared a treasonable surrender of the vital principles of the faith.

This criminal compliance of the Gnostics, no doubt, countenanced and darkened those charges of unbridled

¹ Tertullian taunts the Valentinians, — “*nihil magis curant quam occultare quid prædicant, si tamen prædicant qui occultant.*” — Tert. adv. Valent.

licentiousness of manners with which they are almost indiscriminately assailed by the early Fathers. Those dark and incredible accusations of midnight meetings, where all the restraints of shame and of nature were thrown off, which Pagan hostility brought against the general body of the Christians, were re-iterated by the Christians against these sects, whose principles were those of the sternest and most rigid austerity. They are accused of openly preaching the indifference of human action. The material nature of man was so essentially evil and malignant, that there was no necessity, as there could be no advantage, in attempting to correct its inveterate propensities. While, therefore, that nature might pursue, uncontrolled, its own innate and inalienable propensities, the serene and uncontaminated spirit of those, at least, who were enlightened by the divine ray, might remain aloof, either unconscious of, or, at least, unparticipant in, the aberrations of its grovelling consort. Such general charges it is equally unjust to believe, and impossible to refute. The dreamy indolence of mysticism is not unlikely to degenerate into voluptuous excess. The excitement of mental has often a strong effect on bodily emotion. The party of the Gnostics may have contained many whose passions were too strong for their principles, or who may have made their principles the slaves of their passions; but Christian charity and sober historical criticism concur in rejecting these general accusations. The Gnostics were, mostly, imaginative rather than practical fanatics: they indulged a mental rather than corporeal license. The Carpocratians have been exposed to the most obloquy. But, even in their case, the charitable doubts of dispassionate historical criticism are justified

by those of an ancient writer, who declares his disbelief of any irreligious, lawless, or forbidden practices among these sectaries.¹

It was the re-action, as it were, of Gnosticism, that produced the last important modification of Christianity, during the second century,—the Montanism of Phrygia. But we have, at present, proceeded in our relation of the contest between Orientalism and Christianity so far beyond the period to which we conducted the contest with Paganism, that we re-ascend at once to the commencement of the second century. Montanism, however thus remotely connected with Gnosticism, stands alone and independent as a new aberration from the primitive Christianity, and will demand our attention in its influence upon one of the most distinguished and effective of the early Christian writers.

¹ Καὶ εἰ μὲν πρῶσεται παρ' αὐτοῖς τὰ ἄθεα, καὶ ἐκθεσμα, καὶ ὑπειρημένα, ἐγὼ οὐκ ἂν πιστεύσαιμι. — Irenæus, i. 24. The Philosophumena accuses the Simonians of following the example of their master, whose Helena was his mistress. They used a coarse phrase to excuse promiscuous concubinage. But all this must, I think, be accepted with much reservation, as well as their orgies.

CHAPTER VI.

Christianity during the Prosperous Period of the Roman Empire.

WITH the second century of Christianity commenced the reign of another race of emperors. Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, were men of larger minds, more capable of embracing the vast empire, and of taking a wide and comprehensive survey of the interests, the manners, and the opinions of the various orders and races of men which reposed under the shadow of the Roman sway. They were not, as the first Cæsars, monarchs of Rome, governing the other parts of the world as dependent provinces; but sovereigns of the Western World, which had gradually coalesced into one majestic and harmonious system. Under the military dominion of Trajan, the empire appeared to re-assume the strength and enterprise of the conquering republic: he had invested the whole frontier with a defence more solid and durable than the strongest line of fortresses, or the most impregnable wall,—the terror of the Roman arms, and the awe of Roman discipline. If the more prudent Hadrian withdrew the advanced boundaries of the empire, it seemed in the consciousness of strength, disdaining the occupation of wild and savage districts, which rather belonged to the yet-unreclaimed realm of barbarism, than were fit to be incorporated in the dominion of civilization. Even in the East, the Euphrates appeared to be a boundary

Roman emperors at the commencement of the second century.

traced by nature for the dominion of Rome. Hadrian was the first emperor who directed his attention to the general internal affairs of the whole population of the empire. The spirit of jurisprudence prevailed during the reign of the Antonines ; and the main object of the ruling powers seemed to be the uniting under one general system of law the various members of the great political confederacy. Thus, each contributed to the apparent union and durability of the social edifice. This period has been considered by many able writers a kind of golden age of human happiness.¹ What, then, was the effect of Christianity on the general character of the times ; and how far were the Christian communities excluded from the general felicity ?

It was impossible that the rapid and universal progress of a new religion should escape the notice of minds so occupied with the internal as well as the external affairs of the whole empire. But it so happened (the Christian will admire in this singular concurrence of circumstances the overruling power of a beneficent Deity), that the moderation and humanity of the emperors stepped in, as it were, to allay at this particular crisis the dangers of a general and inevitable collision

¹ This theory is most ably developed by Hegewisch. See the translation of his *Essay*, by M. Solvet. Paris, 1834. The silence of history, that too faithful record in general of the folly and misery, of the wars and devastating conquests of mankind, may seem a full testimony to the happiness of the era ; but this silence is perhaps mainly due to other causes. In fact, there is, properly speaking, no history of the times ; and, even if there were what is ordinarily received as history, it might throw but dim light on the condition of the masses of mankind throughout the vast empire. Peace was undoubtedly in itself a blessing ; but how much oppression, tyranny of the government over all, of class over class, may be hid under the smooth surface of peace ! The vast, comprehensive, and age-enduring fabric of Roman Jurisprudence, which began to rise at this time, bears nobler witness to the wisdom of the rulers, and to the distribution of equal justice, that best guard and guarantee of human happiness, over the whole empire.

with the temporal government. Christianity itself was just in that state of advancement in which, though it had begun to threaten, and even to make most alarming encroachments on, the established Polytheism, it had not so completely divided the whole race of mankind as to force the heads of the Polytheistic party, the official conservators of the existing order of things, to take violent and decisive measures for its suppression. The temples, though perhaps becoming less crowded, were in few places deserted; the alarm, though perhaps in many towns it was deeply brooding in the minds of the priesthood, and of those connected by zeal or by interest with the maintenance of Paganism, was not so profound or so general as imperiously to require the interposition of the civil authorities. The milder or more indifferent character of the emperor had free scope to mitigate or to arrest the arm of persecution. The danger was not so pressing but that it might be averted: that which had arisen thus suddenly and unexpectedly (so little were the wisest probably aware of the real nature of the revolution working in the minds of men) might die away with as much rapidity. Under an emperor, indeed, who should have united the vigor of a Trajan and the political forethought of a Hadrian with the sanguinary relentlessness of a Nero, Christianity would have had to pass a tremendous ordeal. Now, however, the collision of the new religion with the civil power was only occasional, and, as it were, fortuitous; and, in these occasional conflicts with the ruling powers, we constantly appear to trace the character of the reigning sovereign.

Of these emperors, Trajan possessed the most powerful and vigorous mind,—a consummate general, a

Characters of
the emperors
favorable to
the advance-
ment of
Christianity

humane but active ruler: Hadrian was the profoundest statesman; the Antonines, the best men.

Trajan emperor from A.D. 98 to 116.

The conduct of Trajan was that of a military sovereign, whose natural disposition was tempered with humanity, — prompt, decisive, never unnecessarily prodigal of blood, but careless of human life if it appeared to stand in the way of any important design, or to hazard that paramount object of the government, the public peace. Hadrian was

Hadrian emperor from 117 to 138.

inclined to a more temporizing policy. The more the Roman empire was contemplated as a whole, the more the co-existence of multifarious religions might appear compatible with the general peace. Christianity might, in the end, be no more dangerous than the other foreign religions, which had flowed, and were still flowing, in from the East. The temples of Isis had arisen throughout the empire, but those of Jupiter or Apollo had not lost their votaries: the Eastern mysteries, the Phrygian, at a later period the Mithriac, had mingled, very little to their prejudice, with the general mass of the prevailing superstitions. The last characteristic of Christianity which would be distinctly understood, was its invasive and

Antoninus Pius emperor from 138 to 161.

uncompromising spirit. The elder Antoninus may have pursued from mildness of character the course adopted by Hadrian from policy. The change which took place during the reign of Marcus Aurelius may be attributed to the circumstances of the time; though the pride of philosophy, as well as the established religion, might begin to take the alarm.

Christianity had probably spread with partial and very unequal success in different quarters: its converts bore in various cities or districts a very different

proportion to the rest of the population. Nowhere, perhaps, had it advanced with greater rapidity than in the northern provinces of Asia Minor, where the inhabitants were of very mingled descent, neither purely Greek nor essentially Asiatic, with a considerable proportion of Jewish colonists, chiefly of Babylonian or Syrian, not of Palestinian, origin. It is here, in the province of Bithynia, that Polytheism first discovered the deadly enemy which was undermining her authority. It was here that the first cry of distress was uttered, and complaints of deserted temples and less frequent sacrifices were brought before the tribunal of the government. The memorable correspondence between Pliny and Trajan is the most valuable record of the early Christian history during this period.¹ It represents to us Paganism already claiming the alliance of power to maintain its decaying influence; Christianity proceeding in its silent course, imperfectly understood by a wise and polite Pagan, yet still with nothing to offend his moral judgment, except its contumacious repugnance to the common usages of society. This contumacy, nevertheless, according to the recognized principle of passive obedience to the laws of the empire, was deserving of the severest punishment. The appeal of Pliny to the supreme authority for advice as to the course to be pursued with these new, and, in most respects, harmless delinquents, unquestionably implies that no general practice had

Christianity
in Bithynia
and the
adjacent
provinces.
A D. 111
or 112.

Letter of
Pliny.

¹ The chronology of Pagi (*Critica in Baronium*) appears to me the most trustworthy as to the date of Pliny's letter; so too, in opposition to Mr. Fynes Clinton, who dates Pliny's letter in 104, concur Mr. Greswell and Mr. Charles Merivale. He places it in the year 111 or 112. Pagi dates the martyrdom of Ignatius, or rather the period when he was sent to Rome, in 112, the time when Trajan was in the East, preparing for his Persian war; but Trajan's journey to the East was not before 114 or 115.

yet been laid down to guide the provincial governors in such emergencies.¹ The answer of Trajan is characterized by a spirit of moderation. It betrays humane anxiety to allow all such offenders as were not forced under the cognizance of the public tribunals, to elude persecution. Nevertheless it distinctly intimates, that by some existing law, or by the ordinary power of the provincial governor, the Christians were amenable to the severest penalties, to torture, and even to capital punishment. Such punishment had already been inflicted by Pliny: as governor, he had been forced to interfere by accusations lodged before his tribunal. An anonymous libel, or impeachment, had denounced numbers of persons; some of whom altogether disclaimed, others declared that they had renounced, Christianity. With that unthinking barbarity with which in those times such punishments were inflicted on persons in inferior station, two servants, females,—it is possible they were deaconesses,—were put to the torture, to ascertain the truth of the vulgar accusations against the Christians. On their evidence, Pliny could detect nothing further than a “culpable and extravagant superstition.”² The only facts which he could discover were, that they had a custom of meeting together before daylight, and singing a hymn to Christ as God. They were bound together by no unlawful sacrament, but only under mutual obligation not to commit theft, robbery, adultery, or fraud. They met a second time in the day, and partook together of food, but that of a perfectly innocent kind. The test of guilt to which

¹ Pliny professes his ignorance, because he had never happened to be present at the trial of such causes. This implies that such trials were not unprecedented.

² “Prava et immodica superstitio.”

he submitted the more obstinate delinquents, was adoration before the statues of the gods and of the emperor, and the malediction of Christ. Those who refused he ordered to be led out to execution.¹ Such was the summary process of the Roman governor; and the approbation of the emperor clearly shows that he had not exceeded the recognized limits of his authority. Neither Trajan nor the senate had before this issued any edict on the subject. The rescript to Pliny invested him with no new powers: it merely advised him, as he had done, to use his actual powers with discretion,² neither to encourage the denunciation of such criminals, nor to proceed without fair and unquestionable evidence. The system of anonymous delation, by which private malice might wreak itself, by false or by unnecessary charges, upon its enemies, Trajan reprobates in that generous spirit with which the wiser and more virtuous emperors constantly repressed that most disgraceful iniquity of the times.³ But it is manifest from the executions ordered by Pliny and sanctioned by the approbation of the emperor, that Christianity was *already* an offence amenable to capital punishment,⁴ and this, either under some existing statute, under the common law of the Empire which invested the provincial governor with the arbitrary power of life and death, or lastly, what in this instance cannot have been the case, the *summum imperium* of the emperor.⁵ While, then, in the individual,

¹ "Duci jussi" cannot bear a milder interpretation.

² "Actum quem debuisti in excutiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant, secutus es." — Traj. ad Plin.

³ "Nam est pessimi exempli, nec nostri sæculi est."

⁴ Those who were Roman citizens were sent for trial to Rome. "Alii quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos."

⁵ This rescript or answer of Trajan, approving of the manner in which Pliny carried his law into execution, and suggesting other regulations for

the profession of Christianity might thus, by the summary sentence of the governor and the tacit approbation of the emperor, be treated as a capital offence, and the provincial governor might appoint the measure and the extent of the punishment, all public assemblies for the purpose of new and unauthorized worship might likewise be suppressed by the magistrate: for the police of the empire always looked with the utmost jealousy on all associations not recognized by the law; and resistance to such a mandate would call down, or the secret holding of such meetings after their prohibition would incur, any penalty which the conservator of public order might think proper to inflict upon the delinquent. Such, then, was the general position of the Christians with the ruling authorities. They were guilty of a crime against the state, by introducing a new and unauthorized religion, or by holding assemblages contrary to the internal regulations of the empire. But the extent to which the law would be enforced against them; how far Christianity would be distinguished from Judaism and other foreign religions, which were permitted the free establishment of their rights; with how much greater jealousy their secret assemblies would be watched than those of other mysteries and esoteric religions,—all this would depend upon the milder or more rigid character of the governor, and the willingness or reluctance of their fellow-citizens to arraign them before the tribunal of the magistrates. This, in turn, would depend on the

his conduct, is converted by Mosheim into a new law, which from that time became one of the statutes of the empire. “*Hæc Trajani lex inter publicas Imperii sanctiones relata*” (p. 234). Trajan’s words expressly declare that no certain rule of proceeding can be laid down, and leave almost the whole question to the discretion of the magistrate. “*Neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habet, constitui potest.*”—Traj. ad Plin

circumstances of the place and the time; on the caprice of their enemies; on their own discretion; on their success, and the apprehensions and jealousies of their opponents. In general, so long as they made no visible impression upon society; so long as their absence from the religious rites of the city or district, or even from the games and theatrical exhibitions which were essential parts of the existing Polytheism, caused no sensible diminution in the concourse of the worshippers,—their unsocial and self-secluding disposition would be treated with contempt and pity rather than with animosity. The internal decay of the spirit of Polytheism had little effect on its outward splendor. The philosophic party, who despised the popular faith, were secure in their rank or in their decent conformity to the public ceremonial. The theory of all the systems of philosophy was to avoid unnecessary collision with the popular religious sentiment: their superiority to the vulgar was flattered, rather than offended, by the adherence of the latter to their native superstitions. In the public exhibitions, the followers of all other foreign religions met, as on a common ground. In the theatre or the hippodrome, the worshipper of Isis or of Mithra mingled with the mass of those who still adhered to Bacchus or to Jupiter. Even the Jews in many parts, at least at a later period, in some instances at the present, betrayed no aversion to the popular games or amusements. Though, in Palestine, the elder Herod had met with a sullen and intractable resistance in the religious body of the people against his attempt to introduce Gentile and idolatrous games into the Holy Land, yet it is probable that the foreign Jews were more accommodating. A Jewish

The Jews
not averse
to theatrical
amusements

player, named Aliturus, stood high in the favor of Nero; nor does it appear that he had abandoned his religion. He was still connected with his own race; and some of the priesthood did not disdain to owe their acquittal, on certain charges on which they had been sent prisoners to Rome, to the actor's interest with the emperor or with the ruling favorite Poppæa. After the Jewish war, multitudes of the prisoners were forced to exhibit themselves as gladiators; and, at a later period, the confluence of the Alexandrian
Christians
abstain from
them. Jews to the theatres, where they equalled in numbers the Pagan spectators, endangered the peace of the city. The Christians alone stood aloof from exhibitions which, in their higher and nobler forms, arose out of, and were closely connected with, the Heathen religion; were performed on days sacred to the deities; introduced the deities upon the stage; and, in short, were among the principal means of maintaining in the public mind its reverence for the old mythological fables. The sanguinary diversions of the arena, and the licentious voluptuousness of some of the other exhibitions, were no less offensive to their humanity and to their modesty than those more strictly religious to their piety. Still, so long as they were comparatively few in number, and did not sensibly diminish the concourse to these scenes of public enjoyment, they would be rather exposed to individual acts of vexatious interference, of ridicule, or contempt, than become the victims of a general hostile feeling: their absence would not be resented as an insult upon the public, nor as an act of punishable disrespect against the local or more widely worshipped deity to whose honor the games were dedicated. The time at which they would be in the

greatest danger from what would be thought their suspicious or disloyal refusal to join in the public rejoicings, would be precisely that which has been conjectured with much ingenuity and probability to have been the occasion of their being thus committed with the popular sentiment and with the government, — the celebration of the birthday or the accession of the emperor.¹ With the ceremonial of those days, even if, as may have been the case, the actual adoration of the statue of the emperor was not an ordinary part of the ritual, much which was strictly idolatrous would be mingled up; and the ordinary excuse of the Christians to such charges of disaffection, that they prayed with the utmost fervor for the welfare of the emperor, would not be admitted, either by the sincere attachment of the people and of the government to a virtuous, or their abject and adulatory celebration of a cruel and tyrannical, emperor.

Danger on
occasions
of political
rejoicings.

This crisis in the fate of Christianity — this transition from safe and despised obscurity to dangerous and obnoxious importance — would, of course, depend on the comparative rapidity of its progress in different quarters. In Bithynia, the province of Pliny, it had attained that height in little more than seventy years after the death of Christ. Though a humane and enlightened government might still endeavor to close its eyes upon its multiplying numbers and expanding influence, the keener sight of jealous interest, of rivalry in the command of the popular mind, and of

¹ The conjecture of Pagi, that the attention of the government was directed to the Christians by their standing aloof from the festivals which celebrated the quinquennialia of Trajan (in the year 111 or 112), is extremely probable. Pagi quotes two passages of Pliny on the subject of these general rejoicings. — *Critica* in Baron. i. 100

mortified pride, already anticipated the time when this formidable antagonist might balance, might at length overweigh, the failing powers of Polytheism. Under a less candid governor than Pliny, and an emperor less humane and dispassionate than Trajan, the exterminating sword of persecution would have been let loose, and a relentless and systematic edict for the suppression of Christianity would have hunted down its followers in every quarter of the empire.

Not only the wisdom and humanity of Trajan, but the military character of his reign, would tend to divert his attention from that which belonged rather to the internal administration of the empire.

Probable connection of the persecution under Pliny with the state of the East.

It is far from impossible, though the conjecture is not countenanced by any allusion in the dispatch of Pliny, that the measures adopted against the Christians were not entirely unconnected with the political state of the East. The Roman empire, in the Mesopotamian province, was held on a precarious tenure; the Parthian kingdom had acquired new vigor and energy; and, during great part of his reign, the state of the East must have occupied the active mind of Trajan. The Jewish population of Babylonia and the adjacent provinces was of no inconsiderable importance in the impending contest. There is strong ground for supposing, that the last insurrection of the Jews, under Hadrian, was connected with a rising of their brethren in Mesopotamia, no doubt secretly, if not openly, fomented by the intrigues, and depending on the support, of the King of Parthia. This was at a considerably later period; yet, during the earlier part of the reign of Trajan, the insurrection had already commenced in Egypt and in Cyrene, and in the island of Cyprus;

and no sooner were the troops of Trajan engaged on the eastern frontier, towards the close of his reign, than the Jews rose up in all these provinces, and were not subdued till after they had perpetrated and endured the most terrific massacres.¹ Throughout the Eastern wars of Trajan, this spirit was most likely known to be fermenting in the minds of the whole Jewish population, not only in the insurgent districts, but in Palestine and other parts of the empire. The whole race, which occupied in such vast numbers the conterminous regions, would be watched, therefore, with hostile jealousy by the Roman governors, already prejudiced against their unruly and ungovernable character, and awakened to more than ordinary vigilance by the disturbed aspect of the times. The Christians stood in a singular and ambiguous position between the Jewish and Pagan population; many of them probably descended from, and connected with, the Jews. Their general peaceful habits and orderly conduct would deserve the protection of a parental government: still their intractable and persevering resistance to the religious institutions of the empire might throw some suspicion on the sincerity of their civil obedience. The unusual assertion of religious, might be too closely allied with that of political, independence. At all events, the dubious and menacing state of the East required more than ordinary watchfulness, and a more rigid plan of government in the adjacent provinces; and thus the change in society, which was working unnoticed in the more peaceful and less Christianized West, in the East might be forced upon the attention of an active and inquiring

¹ Euseb. iv. 2. Dio Cass., or, rather, Xiphilin. Orosius, l. 7. Pagi places this Jewish rebellion, A.D. 116

ruler. The apprehensions of the inhabitants themselves would be more keenly alive to the formation of a separate and secluded party within their cities, and religious animosity would eagerly seize the opportunity of implicating its enemies in a charge of disaffection to the existing government. Nor is there wanting evidence that the acts of persecution ascribed to Trajan were, in fact, connected with the military movements of the emperor. The only authentic acts are those of Simeon, Bishop of Jerusalem: I cannot admit those of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch.¹ In the prefatory observations to the former, it is admitted that this martyrdom was a local act of violence. The more celebrated trial of Ignatius is stated to have taken place before the emperor himself at Antioch, when he was preparing for his Eastern campaign. The emperor is represented as kindling to anger at the disparagement of those gods on whose protection he reckoned in the impending war. "What! is our religion to be treated as senseless? Are the gods, on whose alliance we rely against our enemies, to be turned to scorn?"² But the whole interview with Trajan is too legendary to command authority. Nevertheless, at that time there were circumstances which account with singular likelihood for that sudden outburst of persecution in Antioch. Trajan knew that the whole Jewish world was in a state of actual or of threatened insurrection. It is probable, that the clearest understanding, agitated by alarm and hatred, would lose, if it had yet attained, any distinct discernment

¹ See them in Ruinart, *Selecta et sincera Martyrum Acta*.

² *Ἡμεῖς οὖν σοι δοκοῦμεν κατὰ νοῦν μὴ ἔχειν θεοὺς, οἷς καὶ χρώμεθα ξυμμάχοις πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους.* The Jewish legends are full of acts of personal cruelty, ascribed to Trajan, mingled up, as usual, with historical errors and anachronisms. See *Hist. of Jews*, ii. 418.

of the difference between Jews and Christians. Hardly two years before, the Christians had been denounced by a provincial governor in the East as dangerous disturbers of the religion, therefore of the peace, of the empire. At this very time, an earthquake, more than usually terrible and destructive, shook the cities of the East. Antioch suffered its most appalling ravages,—Antioch, crowded with the legionaries prepared for the emperor's invasion of the East, with ambassadors and tributary kings from all parts of the East. The city shook through all its streets: houses, palaces, theatres, temples, fell crashing down. Many were killed: the Consul Peto died of his hurts. The emperor himself hardly escaped through a window, and took refuge in the circus, where he passed some days in the open air. Whence this terrible blow but from the wrath of the gods, who must be appeased by unusual sacrifices? This was towards the end of January: early in February, the Christian bishop, Ignatius, was arrested. We know how, during this century, at every period of public calamity, whatever that calamity might be, the cry of the panic-stricken Heathens was, "The Christians to the lions!" It may be that, in Trajan's humanity, in order to prevent a general massacre by the infuriated populace, or to give greater solemnity to the sacrifice, the execution was ordered to take place, not in Antioch, but in Rome.

From the Epistles of Ignatius¹ (I confine myself to the three short Syriac Epistles, for which we are indebted to Dr. Cureton) it is manifest that this was

¹ I owe this suggestion to the sagacity of Bunsen (*Christianity and Mankind*, p. 89). But the chronology is from Fynes Clinton, *Fasti Hellenici*, who, though he quotes authorities for the close approximation of the two events, seems to have no thought of their historical connection. The description of the earthquake is from Dion Cassius, *lxxviii. 24 et seqq.*

no general persecution. Throughout his journey, the "Bishop of Antioch" is in free communication and correspondence with the Christian communities, and the most eminent bishops of Asia Minor, who appear to be in perfect security: Ignatius alone is in danger. Of this solitary danger he is proud. There is throughout a wild eagerness for martyrdom (how different from the calm serenity of St. Paul!). As he would thus during his journey court, he may reasonably be supposed in Antioch to have provoked, martyrdom; at least he would not have allayed by prudent concession the indignation and anger of the Government. He even deprecates the interference of his Christian friends in his behalf. He fears lest their ill-timed; and, as he thinks, cruelly officious love might by some influence (influence which implies their own complete exemption from danger) deprive him of that glorious crown. He is apprehensive lest their unwelcome appeal to the imperial clemency might meet with success.

Trajan, indeed, is absolved, at least by the almost general voice of antiquity, from the crime of persecuting the Christians.¹ The legend of his redemption

¹ The recent boasted discovery of a catacomb, near the seventh milestone on the Via Nomentana, where Alexander, Bishop of Rome in the reign of Trajan, who is promoted into a martyr, was buried; with a chapel (contemporary, as it is boldly asserted) dedicated to his memory and worship,—is a pure religious romance. A catacomb there is, from which the remains of S. Alexander *are said* to have been removed by Pope Paschal, a Pope of almost the darkest period in the papal annals, A.D. 817–824. Of this there is not the shadow of a shade of historical evidence. As to the chapel (I have visited the spot, and inspected the ruins, and am confident that it was never subterranean,—no part of the catacomb), it was, no doubt, of about the age of Jerome; when pilgrimage to, and worship in, such edifices, sacred to the memory of martyrs, who were multiplied according to the demand, had become a passion. Excepting of Ignatius, probably of Simeon of Jerusalem, there is no authentic martyrdom in the reign of Trajan. The letters of Ignatius—the genuine letters—are conclusive against any persecution of the Christians in Rome.

from purgatory, at the prayer of Pope Gregory I. (Dante, *Purgatoria*, x. 47), and his appearance in heaven as one of the five Heathens to whom salvation was vouchsafed (*Paradiso*, xx. 43), would hardly have grown up, if there had been any tradition of him as another Nero, Decius, or Diocletian.

The cosmopolite and indefatigable mind of Hadrian was more likely to discern with accuracy, and estimate to its real extent, the growing influence of the new religion. Hadrian was, still more than his predecessor, the emperor of the West rather than the monarch of Rome. His active genius withdrew itself altogether from warlike enterprise and foreign conquest; its whole care was centred on the consolidation of the empire within its narrower and uncontested boundaries, and on the internal regulation of the vast confederacy of nations which were gradually becoming more and more assimilated, as subjects or members of the great European empire. The remotest provinces for the first time beheld the presence of the emperor, not at the head of an army summoned to defend the insulted barriers of the Roman territory, or pushing forward the advancing line of conquest; but in more peaceful array, providing for the future security of the frontier by impregnable fortresses; adorning the more flourishing cities with public buildings, bridges, and aqueducts; inquiring into the customs, manners, and even the religion, of the more distant parts of the world; encouraging commerce; promoting the arts; in short, improving, by salutary regulations, for this long period of peace, the prosperity and civilization of the whole empire. Gaul, Britain, Greece, Syria, Egypt, Africa, were in turn honored by the presence, enriched by the

Hadrian
emperor,
A.D. 117.

liberality, and benefited by the wise policy, of the emperor.¹ His personal character showed the same incessant activity and politic versatility. On the frontier, at the head of the army, he put on the hardihood and simplicity of a soldier; disdained any distinction, either of fare or of comfort, from the meanest legionary; and marched on foot, through the most inclement seasons. In the peaceful and voluptuous cities of the South, he became the careless and luxurious Epicurean. Hadrian treated the established religion with the utmost respect; he officiated with solemn dignity as supreme pontiff, and at Rome affected disdain or aversion for foreign religions.² But his mind was essentially imbued with the philosophic spirit:³ he was tempted by every abstruse research, and every forbidden inquiry had irresistible attraction for his curious and busy temper.⁴ At Athens, he was in turn the simple and rational philosopher, the restorer of the splendid temple of Jupiter Olympius, and the awe-struck worshipper in the Eleu-

¹ M. St. Croix observes (in an essay in the *Mém. de l'Académ.* xlix. 409) that we have medals of twenty-five countries through which Hadrian travelled. (Compare Eckhel, vi. 486.) He looked into the crater of Etna; saw the sun rise from Mount Casius; ascended to the cataracts of the Nile; heard the statue of Memnon. He imported exotics from the East. The journeys of Hadrian are traced, in a note to M. Solvet's translation of Hegewisch, cited above. Tertullian calls him "curiositatum omnium explorator." — *Apol.* i. v. Eusebius, *II. E.* v. 5, πάντα τὰ περιέρχον πολυπραγμονῶν.

² "Sacra Romana diligentissimè curavit, peregrina contempsit." — *Spartian.* in Hadrian.

³ "Les autres sentiments de ce prince sont très difficiles à connaître. Il n'embrassa aucun secte, et ne fut ni Académicien ni Stoicien, encore moins Epicurien; il parut constamment livré à cette incertitude d'opinions, fruit de la bizarrerie de son caractère, et d'un savoir superficiel ou mal digéré." — *St. Croix, ubi supra.*

⁴ In the *Cæsars* of Julian, Hadrian is described in the pregnant phrase πολυπραγμονῶν τὰ ἀπόρρητα, — busied about all the secret religions.

sinian mysteries.¹ In the East, he aspired to penetrate the recondite secrets of magic, and professed himself an adept in judicial astrology. In the midst of all this tampering with foreign religions, he at once paid respect to and outraged the prevailing creed by the deification of Antinöus, in whose honor quinquennial games were established at Mantinea; a city built, and a temple, with an endowment for a priesthood,² founded and called by his name, in Egypt: his statues assumed the symbols of various deities. Acts like these, at this critical period, must have tended to alienate a large portion of the thinking class, already wavering in their cold and doubtful Polytheism, to any purer or more ennobling system of religion.

Hadrian not merely surveyed the surface of society, but his sagacity seemed to penetrate deeper into the relations of the different classes to each other, and into the more secret workings of the social system. His regulations for the mitigation of slavery were recommended, not by humanity alone, but by a wise and prudent policy.³ It was impossible that the rapid growth of Christianity could escape the notice of a mind so inquiring as that of Hadrian, or that he could be altogether blind to its ultimate bearings on the social state of the empire. Yet the generally humane and pacific character of his government would be a security against violent measures of persecution; and the liberal study of the

Hadrian's
conduct
towards
Christianity.

¹ The Apology of Quadratus was presented on Hadrian's visit to Athens, when he was initiated in the Mysteries; that of Aristides, when he became Epoptes, A.D. 131. Warburton connects the hostility of the celebrators of the Mysteries towards Christianity with the Apology of Quadratus, and quotes a passage from Jerome to this effect. Compare Routh's *Reliquiæ Sacræ* i. 70.

² Euseb. iv. 8. Hieronym. in Catal. et Rufin.

³ Gibbon, vol. i. ch. ii. p. 71.

varieties of human opinion would induce, if not a wise and rational spirit of toleration, yet a kind of contemptuous indifference towards the most inexplicable aberrations from the prevailing opinions. The apologists for Christianity, Quadratus and Aristides, addressed their works to the emperor, who does not appear to have repelled their respectful homage.¹ The rescript which he addressed, in the early part of his reign, to the proconsul of Asia, afforded the same protection to the Christians against the more formidable danger of popular animosity, which Trajan had granted against anonymous delation. In some of the Asiatic cities, their sullen and unsocial absence from the public assemblies, from the games, and other public exhibitions, either provoked or gave an opportunity for the latent animosity to break out against them. A general acclamation would sometimes demand their punishment. "The Christians to the lions!" was the fierce outcry; and the names of the most prominent or obnoxious of the community would be denounced with the same sudden and uncontrollable hostility. A weak or superstitious magistrate trembled before the popular voice, or lent himself a willing instrument to the fury of the populace. The proconsul Serenus Granianus consulted the emperor as to the course to be pursued on such occasions. The answer of Hadrian is addressed to Minucius Fundanus, probably the successor of Granianus. It enacts, that, in the prosecution of the Christians, the formalities of law should be strictly complied with; that they should be regularly arraigned before the legal tribunal, not condemned on the mere demand of the populace, or in compliance with a lawless outcry.² The edict does credit to the

¹ See the fragments in Routh, *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, i. 69-78.

Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 68, 69. Euseb., *H. E.* iv. 9. Mosheim, whose

humanity and wisdom of Hadrian. But, notwithstanding his active and inquisitive mind, and the ability of his general policy, few persons were perhaps less qualified to judge of the real nature of the new religion, or to comprehend the tenacious hold which it would obtain upon the mind of man. His character wanted depth and seriousness to penetrate or to understand the workings of a high, profound, and settled religious enthusiasm.¹ The graceful verses which he addressed to his departing spirit² contrast with the solemn earnestness with which the Christians were teaching mankind to consider the mysteries of another life. But on the whole, the long and peaceful reign of Hadrian allowed free

Hadrian incapable of understanding Christianity.

opinions on the state of the Christians are colored by too lenient a view of Roman toleration, considers this edict by no means more favorable to the Christians than that of Trajan. It evidently offered them protection under a new and peculiar exigency.

¹ The well-known letter of Hadrian gives a singular view of the state of the religious society in Egypt, as it existed, or rather, as it appeared to the inquisitive emperor. "I am now, my dear Servianus, become fully acquainted with that Egypt which you praise so highly. I have found the people vain, fickle, and shifting with every breath of popular rumor. Those who worship Serapis are Christians, and those who call themselves Christian bishops are worshippers of Serapis. There is no ruler of a Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan, no Christian bishop, who is not an astrologer, an interpreter of prodigies, and an anointer. The patriarch himself, when he comes to Egypt, is compelled by one party to worship Serapis; by the other, Christ. . . . They have but one God: him Christians, Jews, and Gentiles worship alike." This latter clause Casaubon understood seriously. It is evidently malicious satire. The common God is Gain. The key to the former curious statement is probably, that the tone of the higher, the fashionable society in Alexandria was to affect, either on some Gnostic or philosophic theory, that all these religions differed only in form, but were essentially the same; that all adored one Deity, all one Logos or Demiurge, under different names; all employed the same arts to impose upon the vulgar, and all were equally despicable to the real philosopher. Dr. Burton, in his *History of the Church*, suggested, with much ingenuity that the Samaritans may have been the Gnostic followers of Simon Magus

² *Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca?*

scope to the progress of Christianity; the increasing wealth and prosperity of the empire probably raised in the social scale that class among which it was chiefly disseminated; while the better part of the more opulent would be tempted, at least to make themselves acquainted with a religion the moral influence of which was so manifestly favorable to the happiness of mankind, and which offered so noble a solution of the great problem of human philosophy,—the immortality of the soul.

The gentle temper of the first Antoninus would maintain that milder system which was adopted

Antoninus
Pius emperor,
A.D. 138.

by Hadrian from policy or from indifference.

The emperor, whose parental vigilance scrutinized the minutest affairs of the most remote province, could not be ignorant, though his own residence was fixed in Rome and its immediate neighborhood, of the still-expanding progress of Christianity. The religion itself acquired every year a more public character. The Apology now assumed the tone of an arraignment of the folly and unholiness of the established Polytheism; nor was this a low and concealed murmur within the walls of its own places of assemblage, or propagated in the quiet intercourse of the brethren. It no longer affected disguise, or dissembled its hopes; it approached the foot of the throne; it stood in the attitude, indeed, of a suppliant, claiming the inalienable rights of conscience, but asserting in simple confidence its moral superiority, and, in the name of an Apology, publicly preaching its own doctrines in the ears of the sovereign and of the world. The philosophers were joining its ranks; it was rapidly growing up into a rival power, both of the religions and philosophies of the world. Yet, during a reign

in which human life assumed a value and a sanctity before unknown; in which the hallowed person of a senator was not once violated, even by the stern hand of justice;¹ under an emperor who professed and practised the maxim of Scipio, that he had rather save the life of a single citizen than cause the death of a thousand enemies;² who considered the subjects of the empire as one family, of which himself was the parent,³—even religious zeal would be rebuked and overawed; and the provincial governments, which too often reflected the fierce passions and violent barbarities of the throne, would now, in turn, image back the calm and placid serenity of the imperial tribunal. Edicts are said to have been issued to some of the Grecian cities,—Larissa, Thessalonica, and Athens,—and to the Greeks in general, to refrain from any unprecedented severities against the Christians. Another rescript,⁴ addressed to the cities of Asia Minor, speaks language too distinctly Christian even for the anticipated Christianity of disposition evinced by Antoninus. It calls upon the Pagans to avert the anger of Heaven, which was displayed in earthquakes and other public calamities, by imitating the piety, rather than denouncing the atheism, of the Christians. The pleasing vision must, it is to be feared, be abandoned,

¹ Jul. Capit., Anton. Pius, Aug. Script. p. 138.

² Ibid., p. 140.

³ The reign of Antoninus the First is almost a blank in history. The book of Dion Cassius which contained his reign was lost, except a small part, when Xiphilin wrote. Xiphilin asserts that Antoninus favored the Christians.

⁴ The rescript of Antoninus, in Eusebius, to which Xiphilin alludes (Euseb. iv. 13), in favor of the Christians, is now generally given up as spurious. The older writers disputed to which of the Antonini it belonged. Lardner argues, from the Apologies of Justin Martyr, that the Christians were persecuted "even to death" during this reign. The inference is inconclusive: they were obnoxious to the law, and might endeavor to gain the law on their side though it may not have been carried into execution. The general voice of Christian antiquity is favorable to the first Antoninus.

which would represent the best of the Pagan emperors bearing his public testimony in favor of the calumniated Christians ; the man who, from whatever cause, deservedly bore the name of the Pious among the adherents of his own religion, the most wisely tolerant to the faith of the Gospel.

CHAPTER VII.

Christianity and Marcus Aurelius the Philosopher.

THE virtue of Marcus Aurelius the Philosopher was of a more lofty and vigorous character than that of his gentle predecessor. The second Antoninus might seem the last effort of Paganism, or rather of Gentile philosophy, to raise a worthy opponent to the triumphant career of Christianity. A blameless disciple in the severest school of philosophic morality, the austerity of Marcus rivalled that of the Christians in its contempt of the follies and diversions of life; yet his native kindliness of disposition was not hardened and embittered by the severity or the pride of his philosophy.¹ With Aurelius, nevertheless, Christianity found not only a fair and high-minded competitor for the command of the human mind; not only a rival in the exaltation of the soul of man to higher views and more dignified motives,—but a violent and intolerant persecutor. During his reign, the martyrologies become more authentic and credible; the distinct voice of Christian history arraigns the Philosopher, not indeed as the author of a general and systematic plan for the extirpation of Christianity, but as withdrawing even the ambiguous protection of the former emperors, and giving free scope to the excited passions, the wounded pride, and the jealous interests of its

¹ "Verecundus sine ignaviâ, sine tristitiâ gravis." — Jul. Capit., Aug. Hist. p. 160.

enemies; neither discountenancing the stern determination of the haughty governor to break the contumacious spirit of resistance to his authority, nor the outburst of popular fury, which sought to appease the offended gods by the sacrifice of these despisers of their deities.

Three important causes concurred in bringing about this dangerous crisis in the destiny of Christianity at this particular period,—I. The change in the relative position of Christianity to the religion of the empire; II. The circumstances of the times; III. The character of the emperor.

Three causes of the hostility of M. Aurelius and his government to Christianity.

I. Sixty years of almost uninterrupted peace, since the beginning of the second century, had opened a wide field for the free development of Christianity. It had spread into every quarter of the Roman dominions. The Western provinces, Gaul and Africa, rivalled the East in the number, if not in the opulence, of their Christian congregations. In almost every city had gradually arisen a separate community, seceding from the ordinary habits and usages of life, at least from the public religious ceremonial; governed by its own laws; acting upon a common principle; and bound together in a kind of latent federal union throughout the empire. A close and intimate correspondence connected this new moral republic. An impulse, an opinion, a feeling, which originated in Egypt or Syria, was propagated with electric rapidity to the remotest frontier of the West. Irenæus, the Bishop of Lyons in Gaul, whose purer Greek had been in danger of corruption from his intercourse with the barbarous Celtic tribes, enters into a controversy with the speculative teachers

I. Altered position of Christianity in regard to Paganism.

of Antioch, Edessa, or Alexandria; while Tertullian, in his rude African Latin, denounces or advocates opinions which sprang up in Pontus or in Phrygia. A new kind of literature had arisen, propagated with the utmost zeal of proselytism, among a numerous class of readers, who began to close their ears against the profane fables and the unsatisfactory philosophical systems of Paganism. While the emperor himself condescended, in Greek of no despicable purity and elegance for the age, to explain the lofty tenets of the Porch, and to commend its noble morality to his subjects, the minds of a large portion of the world were pre-occupied by writers who, in language often impregnated with foreign and Syrian barbarisms, enforced still higher morals, resting upon religious tenets altogether new and incomprehensible excepting to the initiate. Their sacred books were of still higher authority,—commanded the homage, and required the diligent and respectful study, of all the disciples of the new faith. Nor was this empire within the empire, this universally disseminated sect,—which had its own religious rites; its own laws to which it appealed rather than to the statutes of the empire; its own judges (for the Christians, wherever they were able, submitted their disputes to their bishop and his associate presbyters); its own financial regulations, whether for the maintenance of public worship, or for charitable purposes; its own religious superiors, who exercised a very different control from that of the pontiffs or sacerdotal colleges of Paganism; its own usages and conduct; in some respects, its own language,—confined to one class, or to one description of Roman subjects. Christians were to be found in the court, in the camp, in the commercial market; they discharged

all the duties, and did not decline any of the offices, of society. They did not altogether shun the forum, or abandon all interest in the civil administration; they had their mercantile transactions, in common with the rest of that class. One of their apologists indignantly repels the charge of their being useless to society: "We are no Indian Brahmins, or devotees, living naked in the woods, self-banished from civilized life. We gratefully accept, we repudiate no gift of God the Creator: we are only temperate in their use. We avoid not your forum, your markets, your baths, your shops, your forges, your inns, your fairs. We are one people with you in all worldly commerce. We serve with you as sailors, as soldiers; we are husbandmen and merchants like you. We practise the same arts; we contribute to all public works for your use."¹ Among their most remarkable distinctions, no doubt, was their admission of slaves to an equality in religious privileges. Yet there was no attempt to disorganize or correct the existing relations of society. Though the treatment of slaves in Christian families could not but be softened and humanized, as well by the evangelic temper as by this acknowledged equality in the hopes of another life, yet Christianity left the emancipation of mankind from these deeply rooted distinctions between the free and servile races to

¹ I add Tertullian's Latin: "Infructuosi in negotiis dicimur. Quo pacto homines vobiscum degentes, ejusdem victûs, habitûs, instinctûs, ejusdem ad vitam necessitatis? Neque enim Brachmanæ, aut Indorum gymnosophistæ sumus, sylvicolæ et exules vitæ. Meminimus gratiam nos debere Deo domino creatori, nullum fructum operum ejus repudiamur, planè temperamus, ne ultra modum aut perperam utamur. Itaque non sine foro, non sine macello, non sine balneis, tabernis, officinis, stabulis, nundinis vestris, cæterisque commerciis, cohabitamus in hoc seculo: navigamus et nos vobiscum et militamus, et rusticamur, et mercamur; proinde miscemus artes, opera nostra publicamus usui vestro." — *Apologet.* c. 42.

times which might be ripe for so great and important a change.

This secession of one part of society from its accustomed religious intercourse with the rest, if in nothing but religious intercourse, independent of the numbers whose feelings and interests were implicated in the support of the national religion in all its pomp and authority, would necessarily produce estrangement, jealousy, animosity.

As Christianity became more powerful, a vague apprehension began to spread abroad among the Roman people, that the fall of their old religion might, to a certain degree, involve Connection of Christianity with the fall of the Roman empire. that of their civil dominion; and this apprehension, it cannot be denied, was justified, deepened, and confirmed by the tone of some of the Christian writings, no doubt by the language of some Christian teachers. Idolatry was not merely an individual but a national sin, which would be visited by temporal as well as spiritual retribution. The anxiety of one at least, and that certainly not the most discreet, of the Christian apologists, to disclaim all hostility towards the temporal dignity of the empire, implies that the Christians were obnoxious to this charge. The Christians are calumniated, writes Tertullian to Scapula,¹ at a somewhat later period (under Severus), as guilty of treasonable disloyalty to the emperor. As the occasion required, he exculpates them from any leaning to Niger, Albinus, or Cassius, the competitors of

¹ "Sed et circa majestatem imperii infamamur, tamen nunquam Albiniani, nec Nigriani, vel Cassiani, inveniri potuerunt Christiani.

"Christianus nullius est hostis, nedum Imperatoris; quem sciens a Deo suo constitui, necesse est ut et ipsum diligit, et revereatur, et honoret, et salvum velit, cum toto Romano imperio, quousque sæculum stabit: tamdiu enim stabit." — Tertullian ad Scapulam, 1.

Severus; and then proceeds to make this solemn protestation of loyalty: "The Christian is the enemy of no man, assuredly not of the emperor. The sovereign he knows to be ordained by God; of necessity, therefore, he loves, reveres, and honors him, and prays for his safety, with that of the whole Roman empire, that it may endure—and endure it will—as

Tone of some
Christian
writings con-
firmatory of
this appre-
hension.

long as the world itself."¹ But other Christian documents, or at least documents eagerly disseminated by the Christians, speak a very different language.² By many modern inter-

preters, the Apocalypse itself is supposed to refer, not to the fall of a predicted spiritual Rome, but of the dominant Pagan Rome, the visible Babylon of idolatry and pride and cruelty. According to this view, it is a grand dramatic vaticination of the triumph of Christianity over Heathenism in its secular as well as its spiritual power. Be this as it may, in later writings, the threatening and maledictory tone of the Apocalypse is manifestly borrowed, and directed against the total abolition of Paganism, in its civil as well as religious supremacy. Many of these forged prophetic writings belong to the reign of the Antonines, and could not emanate from any quarter but that of the more injudicious and fanatical Christians. The second (Apocryphal) book of Esdras is of this character, the work of a Judaizing Christian;³ it refers distinctly to

¹ "Quousque sæculum stabit."

² I have been much indebted, in this passage, to the excellent work of Tschirner, "Der Fall des Heidenthums;" a work written with so much learning, candor, and Christian temper, as to excite great regret that it was left incomplete at its author's death.

³ The general character of the work, the nationality of the perpetual allusions to the history and fortunes of the race of Israel, betray the Jew: the passages, chap. ii. 42, 48; v. 5; vii. 26, 29, are avowed Christianity. On this book read Ewald.

the reign of the twelve Cæsars,¹ and obscurely intimates, in many parts, the approaching dissolution of the existing order of things. The doctrine of the Millennium, which was as yet far from exploded or fallen into disregard, mingled with all these prophetic anticipations of future change in the destinies of mankind.² The visible throne of Christ, according to these writings, was to be erected on the ruins of all earthly empires: the nature of his kingdom would, of course, be unintelligible to the Heathen; and all that he would comprehend would be a vague notion that the empire of the world was to be transferred from Rome, and that this extinction of the majesty of the empire was, in some incomprehensible manner, connected with the triumph of the new faith. His terror, his indignation, and his contempt, would lead to fierce and implacable animosity. Even in Tertullian's *Apology*, the ambiguous word "sæculum" might mean no more than a brief and limited period, which was yet to elapse before the final consummation.

But the Sibylline verses, which clearly belong to this period, express, in the most remarkable manner, this spirit of exulting menace at the expected simultaneous fall of Roman idolatry and of Roman empire. The origin of the whole of the Sibylline oracles now extant is not distinctly apparent, either from the style, the manner of composition, or the subject of their predictions.³ It is manifest that they were largely interpolated by the Christians, to a

The Sibylline
books.

¹ C. xii. 14. Compare Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs*, l. vii. c. 2.

² There are apparent allusions to the Millennium in the Sibylline verses, particularly at the close of the eighth book.

³ The first book, to p. 176, may be Jewish; it then becomes Christian, as well as the second. But in these books there is little prophecy: it is in general the Mosaic history, in Greek hexameters. If there are any fragments of Heathen verses, they are in the third book.

late period; and some of the books can be assigned to no other time but the present.¹ Much, no doubt, was of an older date. It is scarcely credible that the Fathers of this time would quote contemporary forgeries as ancient prophecies. The Jews of Alexandria, who had acquired some taste for Grecian poetry, and displayed some talent for the translation of their sacred books into the Homeric language and metre,² had, no doubt, set the example of versifying their own prophecies, and of ascribing them to the Sibyls, whose names were universally venerated, as revealing to mankind the secrets of futurity. They may have begun by comparing their own prophets with these ancient seers, and spoken of the predictions of Isaiah or Ezekiel as their Sibylline verses, which may have been another word for prophetic or oracular.

Almost every region of Heathenism boasts its Sibyl.³ Poetic predictions, ascribed to these inspired women, were either published or religiously preserved in the

¹ "Ad horum imperatorum (Antonini Pii cum liberis suis M. Aurelio et Lucio Vero) tempora videntur Sibyllarum vaticinia tantum extendi; id quod etiam e lib. v. videre licet." — Note of the editor, *Opsopæus*, p. 688.

² Compare Valckenaer's learned treatise, *De Aristobulo Judæo*. The fragments of Ezekiel Tragedus, and many passages, which are evident versions of the Jewish Scriptures, in the works of the Fathers, particularly of Eusebius, may be traced to this school. It is by no means impossible that the Pollio of Virgil may owe many of its beauties to those Alexandrian versifiers of the Hebrew prophets. Virgil, who wrought up indiscriminately into his refined gold all the ruder ore which he found in the older poets, may have seen and admired some of these verses. He may have condescended, as he thought, to borrow the images of these religious books of the barbarians, as a modern might the images of the Vedas or of the Koran.

³ See, on the different Sibyls and the origin of the different poems, the dissertation (*Excursus i. and vi.*) of the new editor of the Sibylline verses, M. Alexandre, t. ii. (Paris, 1856); on the Roman Sibylline books, *Excursus iii.* I do not pledge myself to all M. Alexandre's historical criticism; but I wish to bear my humble testimony to the superiority of this edition over all previous ones. The editor has availed himself of the valuable suggestions of Bleek.

sacred archives of cities. Nowhere were they held in such awful reverence as in Rome. The opening of the Sibylline books was an event of rare occurrence, and only at seasons of fearful disaster or peril. Nothing would be more tempting to the sterner or more ardent Christian than to enlist, as it were, on his side, these authorized Pagan interpreters of futurity; to extort, it might seem, from their own oracles, this confession of their approaching dissolution. Nothing, on the other hand, would more strongly excite the mingled feelings of apprehension and animosity in the minds of the Pagans, than this profanation, as it would appear, whether they disbelieved or credited them, of the sacred treasures of prophecy. It was Paganism made to utter, in its most hallowed language and by its own inspired prophets, its own condemnation; to announce its own immediate downfall, and the triumph of its yet obscure enemy over both its religious and temporal dominion.

The fifth and eighth books of the Sibylline oracles are those which most distinctly betray the sentiments and language of the Christians of this period.¹ In the spirit of the Jewish prophets, they denounce the folly of worshipping gods of wood and stone, of ivory, of gold, and silver; of offering incense and sacrifice to dumb and deaf deities. The gods of Egypt, and those of Greece,—Hercules, Jove, and Mercury,—are cut off. The whole sentiment is in the contemptuous and aggressive tone of the later, rather than the more temperate and defensive argument of the earlier, apologists for Christianity. But the Sibyls are made, not merely to denounce the fall of Heathenism, but the ruin of Heathen states and the desolation of Heathen cities. Many passages relate to Egypt, and

¹ Lib. v. p. 557.

seem to point out Alexandria, with Asia Minor, the cities of which, particularly Laodicea, are frequently noticed, as the chief staple of these poetico-prophetic forgeries.¹ The following passage might almost seem to have been written after the destruction of the Serapeum by Theodosius:² “Isis, thrice-hapless goddess, thou shalt remain alone on the shores of the Nile, a solitary Mænad by the sands of Acheron. No longer shall thy memory endure upon the earth. And thou, Serapis, that retest upon thy stones, much must thou suffer; thou shalt be the mightiest ruin in thrice-hapless Egypt, and those who worshipped thee for a god shall know thee to be nothing. And one of the linen-clothed priests shall say, Come, let us build the beautiful temple of the true God; let us change the awful law of our ancestors, who, in their ignorance, made their pomps and festivals to gods of stone and clay; let us turn our hearts, hymning the Everlasting God.

¹ Θμοῦις καὶ Ξοῦις θλίβεται, καὶ κόπτεται.

Βουλὴ Ἡρακλεοῦς τε Διὸς τε καὶ Ἑρμείου. — P. 558.

The first of these lines is mutilated.

² Ἰσὶ, θεὰ τριτάλαινα, μενεῖς δ' ἐπὶ χεύμασι Νείλου,
Μούνη, μαινὰς ἄτακτος, ἐπὶ ψαμάθοις Ἀχέροντος,
Κούκέτι σου μενῖά γε μενεῖ κατὰ γαίαν ἅπασαν.
Καὶ σὺ Σέραπι, λίθοις ἐπικείμενε, πολλὰ μογήσεις,
Κείσῃ πτώμα μέγιστον, ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τριταλαίνῃ.

Γνώσονται σε τὸ μηδὲν, ὅσοι Θεὸν ἐξύμνησαν.
Καὶ τις ἔρεῖ τῶν ἱερέων λινσόσσιος ἀνὴρ
Δεῦτε Θεοῦ τέμενος καλὸν στήθωμεν ἀληθές,
Δεῦτε τὸν ἐκ προγόνων δεινὸν νόμον ἀλλάξωμεν,
Τοῦ χάριν ἢ λίθινους καὶ ὀστρακίνοισι θεοῖσι
Πομπὰς καὶ τελετὰς ποιοῦμενοι οὐκ ἔνοησαν,
Στρέψωμεν ψυχὰς, Θεὸν ἀφθιτον ἐξυμνοῦντες.
Αἰτὸν τὸν γενετῆρα, τὸν αἰδίων γεγαῶτα,
Τὸν πρυτανὶν πάντων, τὸν ἀληθέα, τὸν βασιλῆα.
Ψυχοτρόφοι γενετῆρα, Θεὸν μέγαν, αἰὲν ἔοντα.

the Eternal Father, the Lord of all, the True, the King, the Creator and Preserver of our souls, the Great, the Eternal God."

A bolder prophet, without doubt writing precisely at this perilous crisis, dares, in the name of a Sibyl, to connect together the approaching fall of Rome and the gods of Rome. "O haughty Rome! the just chastisement of Heaven shall come down upon thee from on high; thou shalt stoop thy neck, and be levelled with the earth; and fire shall consume thee, razed to thy very foundations; and thy wealth shall perish; wolves and foxes shall dwell among thy ruins, and thou shalt be desolate as if thou hadst never been. Where then will be thy Palladium? Which of thy gods of gold, or of stone, or of brass, shall save thee? Where then the decrees of thy senate? Where the race of Rhea, of Saturn, or of Jove; all the lifeless deities thou hast worshipped, or the shades of the deified dead? When thrice five gorgeous Cæsars [the twelve Cæsars usually so called, with Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian], who have enslaved the world from east to west shall be, one will arise silver-helmed, with a name like the neighboring sea [Hadrian and the Hadriatic Sea]." ¹ The poet describes the busy and lavish char-

¹ Ἡξει σοι ποτ' ἄνωθεν ἴση, ὑψάσχευε Τρώμη,
Οὐράνιος πληγῇ, καὶ κάμψεις ἀνχένα πρώτη,
Κάξεδαφισθήσῃ, καὶ πῦρ σε ὅλην δαπανήσῃ
Κεκλιμένην ἐδάφεσσιν ἐοῖς, καὶ πλοῦτος ὀλείται,
Καὶ σὰ θέμεθλα λύκοι, καὶ ἰλώπεκες οἰκήσουσι.
Καὶ τότ' ἔσῃ πανέρημος ὅλως, ὥς μὴ γεγωνῖα.
Ποῦ τότε Παλλάδιον; ποῖος σε θεὸς διασώσῃ,
Χρυσοῦς, ἢ λίθινος, ἢ χάλκεος; ἢ τότε πον σοι
Δόγματα συγκλήτου; ποῦ, Ῥεῖης, ἢ Κρόνιοι,
Ἡὲ Διὸς γενεῇ, καὶ πάντων ὧν ἐσεβύσθης
Δαίμονας ἀψύχους, νέκρῳν εἰδῶλα καμόντων;

acter of Hadrian, his curiosity in prying into all religious mysteries, and his deification of Antinöus.¹

“After him shall reign three, *whose times shall be the last*.² . . . Then from the uttermost parts of the earth, whither he fled, shall the matricide [Nero] return.³ And now, O king of Rome! shalt thou

Ἄλλ' ὅτε σοι βασιλεῖς χλιδανοὶ τρεῖς πέντε γέγονται,
Κόσμον δουλώσαντες ὑπ' ἀντολῆς μέχρι δυσμῶν,
Ἔσσετ' ἀναξ πολυόκρανος, ἔχων πέλας οὐνομα πόντον.

Lib. viii. p. 679.

The ruin of Rome, and the restoration of Europe to the East, are likewise alluded to in the following passages: lib. iii. p. 404–408; v. 573–576; viii. 694, 712, 718.

There is another allusion to Hadrian, lib. v. p. 552, much more laudatory: Ἔσται καὶ πανάριστος ἄνθρωπος, καὶ πάντα νοήσει.

¹ Κόσμον ἐποπτεύων μαρῶ ποδὶ, δῶρα πορίζων

Καὶ μαγικῶν ἀδύτων μυστήρια πάντα μεθέξει,
Παιδὰ θεὸν δεικνύσει, ὑπαντα σεβύσματα λύσει.— P. 688.

(Compare the twelfth book, published by A. Mai, where the reading is *ιδίῳ ποδὶ*, line 167.)

² Τὸν μετὰ τρεῖς ἄρξουσι, πανύστατον ἡμᾶς ἔχοντες —

One of these three is to be an old man, to heap up vast treasures, in order to surrender them to the Eastern destroyer, Nero —

ὣν ὅταν γ' ἀπανέλθῃ
Ἐκ περὶτων γαίης ὃ φυγὰς μητροκτόνος ἔλθῶν.
Καὶ τότε πενήσεις, πλατὺ πόρφυρον ἡγεμονίῃν
Ψῶς ἐκδυσάμενῃ, καὶ πένθιμον εἶμα φεροῦσα.

Καὶ γὰρ ἀετοφόρων λεγεῶνων δόξα πεσεῖται.
Ποῦ τότε σοι τὸ κράτος; ποῖα γῇ σύμμαχος ἔσται,
Δουλωθεῖσα τεαῖς μάταιοφροσύνῃσιν ἀθέσμως;
Πάσης γὰρ γαίης θνητῶν τότε σύγχυσις ἔσται,
Αὐτὸς παντοκράτωρ ὅταν ἔλθῶν βήμασι κρίνῃ
Ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν ψυχὰς, καὶ κόσμον ὑπαντα.

Ἐκ τοτέ σοι βρυγμὸς, καὶ σκορπισμὸς, καὶ ἄλωσις,
Πτῶσις ὅταν ἔλθῃ πόλεων, καὶ χάσματα γαίης.

Lib. viii. 688.

³ The strange notion of the flight of Nero beyond the Euphrates, from

mourn, disrobed of the purple laticlave of thy rulers, and clad in sackcloth. The glory of thy eagle-bearing legions shall perish. Where shall be thy might? What land, which thou hast enslaved by thy vain laurels, shall be thine ally? For there shall be confusion on all mortals over the whole earth, when the Almighty Ruler comes, and, seated upon his throne, judges the souls of the quick and of the dead, and of the whole world. There shall be wailing, and scattering abroad, and ruin, when the fall of the cities shall come, and the abyss of earth shall open."

In another passage, the desolation of Italy, the return of Nero, the general massacre of kings, are portrayed in fearful terms. The licentiousness of Rome is detailed in the blackest colors: "Sit silent in thy sorrow, O guilty and luxurious city! the vestal virgins shall no longer watch the sacred fire; thy house is desolate."¹ Christianity is then represented under the

whence he was to return as Antichrist, is almost the burthen of the Sibylline verses. Compare lib. iv. p. 520-525, v. 573, where there is an allusion to his theatrical tastes, 619-714. The best commentary is that of St. Augustine on the Thessalonians: "Et tunc revelabitur ille iniquus. Ego prorsus quid dixerit me fateor ignorare. Suspiciones tamen hominum, quas vel audire vel legere de hâc re potui, non tacebo. Quidam putant hoc de *imperio dictum fuisse Romano*; et propterea Paulum Apostolum non id apertè scribere voluisse, ne calumniam videlicet incurreret quod Romano imperio malè optaverit, cum speraretur æternum: ut hoc quod dixit, 'Jam enim mysterium iniquitatis operatur,' Neronem voluerit intelligi, cujus jam facta velut Antichristi videbantur; unde nonnulli ipsum resurrecturum et futurum Antichristum suspicantur. Alii vero nec eum occisum putant, sed subtractum potius, ut putaretur occisus; et vivum occultari in vigore ipsius ætatis, in quâ fuit cum orderetur extinctus, donec suo tempore reveletur, et restituatur in regnum." According to the Sibyls, Nero was to make an alliance with the kings of the Medes and Persians, return at the head of a mighty army, accomplish his favorite scheme of digging through the Isthmus of Corinth, and then conquer Rome. For the manner in which Neander traces the germ of this notion in the Apocalypse, see Pflanzung, *Der Chr. Kirche*, ii. 327. Nero is Antichrist in the political verses of Commodianus, xli. Compare M. Alexandre, ii. 495.

¹ Lib. v. p. 621.

image of a pure and heaven-descending temple, embracing the whole human race.

Whether or not these prophecies merely embodied, for the private edification, the sentiments of the Christians, they are manifest indications of these sentiments; and they would scarcely be concealed with so much prudence and discretion as not to transpire among adversaries, who now began to watch them with jealous vigilance: if they were boldly published, for the purpose of converting the Heathen, they would be still more obnoxious to the general indignation and hatred. However the more moderate and rational, probably the greater number, of the Christians might deprecate these dangerous and injudicious effusions of zeal, the consequences would involve all alike in the indiscriminating animosity which they would provoke; and, whether or not these predictions were contained in the Sibylline poems, quoted by all the early writers, by Justin Martyr, by Clement, and by Origen, the attempt to array the authority of the Sibyls against that religion and that empire, of which they were before considered almost the tutelary guardians, would goad the rankling aversion into violent resentment.

The general superiority assumed in any way by Christianity, directly it came into collision with the opposite party, would of itself be fatal to the peace which it had acquired in its earlier obscurity. Of all pretensions, man is most jealous of the claim to moral superiority.

II. The darkening aspect of the times wrought up this growing alienation and hatred to open and furious hostility. In the reign of M. Aurelius, we approach the verge of that

II. Change in
the circum-
stances of
the times.

narrow oasis of peace which intervenes between the final conquests of Rome and the recoil of repressed and threatening barbarism upon the civilization of the world. The public mind began to be agitated with gloomy rumors from the frontier, while calamities, though local, yet spread over wide districts, shook the whole Roman people with apprehension. Foreign and civil wars, inundations, earthquakes, pestilences, which I shall presently assign to their proper dates, awoke the affrighted empire from its slumber of tranquillity and peace.¹

The emperor Marcus reposed not, like his predecessor, in his Lanuvian villa, amid the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, or with the great jurisconsults of the time, meditating on a general system of legislation. The days of the second Numa were gone by, and the Philosopher must leave his speculative school and his Stoic friends to place himself at the head of the legions. New levies invade the repose of peaceful families; even the public amusements are encroached upon; the gladiators are enrolled to serve in the army.² It was at this unexpected crisis of calamity and terror, that Supersti-^{Terror of the Roman world.} tion, which had slept in careless and Epicurean forgetfulness of its gods, suddenly awoke, and, when it fled for succor to the altar of the tutelar deity, found the temple deserted and the shrine neglected. One portion of society stood aloof in sullen disregard or avowed contempt of rites so imperiously demanded by the avenging gods. If, in the time of public distress, true religion inspires serene resignation to the divine

¹ Tillemont, Hist. des Emp. ii. 593.

² "Fuit enim populo hic sermo, cum *sustulisset ad bellum gladiatores quod populum sublati voluptatibus vellet cogere ad philosophiam.*" — Jul. Cap. p 204.

will, and receives the awful admonition to more strenuous and rigid virtue, Superstition shudders at the manifest anger of the gods, yet looks not within to correct the offensive guilt, but abroad to discover some gift or sacrifice which may appease the divine wrath, and bribe back the alienated favor of Heaven. Rarely does it discover any offering sufficiently costly, except human life.¹ The Christians were the public and avowed enemies of the gods; they were the self-designated victims, whose ungrateful atheism had provoked, whose blood might avert, their manifest indignation. The public religious ceremonies, the sacrifices, the games, the theatres, afforded constant opportunities of inflaming and giving vent to the paroxysms of popular fury, with which it disburdened itself of its awful apprehensions. The cry of "The Christians to the lions!" was now no longer the wanton clamor of individual or party malice; it was not murmured by the interested, and eagerly re-echoed by the blood-thirsty, who rejoiced in the exhibition of unusual victims; it was the deep and general voice of fanatic terror, solemnly demanding the propitiation of the wrathful gods, by the sacrifice of these impious apostates from their worship.² The Christians were the authors of all the calamities which were brooding over the world; and in vain their earnest apologists appealed to the prosperity of the empire since the

¹ Compare on similar events, paroxysms of popular religious zeal arising out of public calamities, Hartung, *Religion des Römer*, i. 234.

² The miracle of the thundering legion (see *postea*), after having suffered deadly wounds from former assailants, was finally transfixed by the critical spear of Moyle (*Works*, vol. ii.). Is it improbable that it was invented or wrought up, from a casual occurrence, into its present form, as a kind of counterpoise to the re-iterated charge which was advanced against the Christians, of having caused, by their impiety, all the calamities inflicted by the barbarians on the empire?

appearance of Christ, in the reign of Augustus, and showed that the great enemies of Christianity, the emperors Nero and Domitian, were likewise the scourges of mankind.¹

III. Was, then, the philosopher Aurelius superior to the vulgar superstition? In what manner did his personal character affect the condition of the Christians? Did he authorize, by any new edict, a general and systematic persecution? or did he only give free scope to the vengeance of the awe-struck people, and countenance the timid or fanatic concessions of the provincial governors to the riotous demand of the populace for Christian blood? Did he actually repeal or suspend, or only neglect to enforce, the milder edicts of his predecessors, which secured to the Christians a fair and public trial before the legal tribunal?² The acts ascribed to Marcus Aurelius, in the meagre and unsatisfactory annals of his reign, are at issue with the sentiments expressed in his grave and lofty "Meditations." He assumes, in his philosophical lucubrations, which he dictated during his campaigns upon the Danube, the tone of profound religious sentiment, but proudly disclaims the influence of superstition upon his mind. Yet in Rome he either shared, or condescended to appear to share, all the terrors of the people. The pestilence, said to have been introduced from the East by the soldiers on their return from the Parthian campaign,

¹ Melito apud Routh, Reliq. Sacr. i. 111. Compare Tertullian, Apologet. v.

² There is an edict of the Emperor Aurelian in the genuine Acts of St. Symphorian, in which Pagi, Ruinart, and Neander (i. 106) would read the name of M. Aurelius instead of Aurelianus. Their arguments are, in my opinion, inconclusive; and the fact that Aurelian is named among the persecuting emperors in the treatise ascribed to Lactantius (De Mort. Persecutor.), in which his edicts (*scripta*) against the Christians are distinctly named, outweighs their conjectural objections.

had not yet ceased its ravages, when the public mind was thrown into a state of the utmost depression by the news of the Marcomannic war. M. Aurelius, as we shall hereafter see, did not, in his proper person, countenance, to the utmost, the demands of the popular superstition. For all the vulgar arts of magic, divination, and vaticination, the emperor declares his sovereign contempt; yet on that occasion, besides the public religious ceremonies, to which I shall presently allude, he is said himself to have tampered with the dealers in the secrets of futurity,—to have lent a willing ear to the prognostications of the Chaldeans and to the calculations of astrology. If these facts

Private sentiments of the emperor, in his "Meditations."

be true, and all this were not done in mere compliance with the general sentiment, the serene composure of Marcus himself may at times have darkened into terror; his philosophic apathy may not always have been exempt from the influence of shuddering devotion. In issuing an edict against the Christians, Marcus may have supposed that he was consulting the public good, by conciliating the alienated favor of the gods. But the superiority of the Christians to all the terrors of death appears at once to have astonished and wounded the Stoic pride of the emperor. Philosophy, which was constantly dwelling on the solemn question of the immortality of the soul, could not comprehend the eager resolution with which the Christian departed from life; and, in the bitterness of jealousy, sought out unworthy motives for the intrepidity which it could not emulate. "How great is that soul which is ready, if it must depart from the body, to be extinguished, to be dispersed, or still to subsist! And this readiness must proceed from the individual judgment, not

from mere obstinacy, like the Christians, but deliberately, solemnly, and without tragic display.”¹ The emperor did not choose to discern, that it was in the one case the doubt, in the other the assurance, of the eternal destiny of the soul, which constituted the difference. Marcus, no doubt, could admire, not merely the dignity with which the philosopher might depart on his uncertain but necessary disembarkation from the voyage of life, and the bold and fearless valor with which his own legionaries or their barbarous antagonists could confront death on the field of battle; but, at the height of his wisdom, he could not comprehend the exalted enthusiasm with which the Christian trusted in the immortality and blessedness of the departed soul in the presence of God.

There can be little doubt, that Marcus Antoninus issued an edict by which the Christians were again exposed to all the denunciations of common informers, whose zeal was now whetted by some share, if not by the whole, of the confiscated property of delinquents. The most distinguished Christians of the East were sacrificed to the base passions of the meanest of mankind, by the emperor, who, with every moral qualification to appreciate the new religion, closed his ears, either in the stern apathy of Stoic philosophy, or the more engrossing terrors of Heathen bigotry.

It is remarkable how closely the more probable

¹ The emperor's Greek is by no means clear in this remarkable passage. *Ψαλὴν παράταξιν* is usually translated as in the text, “mere obstinacy.” A recent writer renders it “ostentation or parade.” I suspect an antithesis with *ιδυκῆς κρίσεως*, and that it refers to the manner in which the Christians arrayed themselves as a body against the authority of the persecutors; and should render the words omitted in the text, *ὥστε καὶ ἄλλον πείσαι*, “and without that tragic display which is intended to persuade others to follow our example.” The Stoic pride would stand alone in the dignity of an intrepid death.

records of Christian martyrology harmonize with the course of events, during the whole reign of M. Aurelius, and illustrate and justify my view of the causes and motives of their persecution.¹

It was on the 7th March, A.D. 161, that the elder Antoninus, in the charitable words of a
 A.D. 161 Christian apologist, sank in death into the sweetest sleep,² and M. Aurelius assumed the reins of empire. He immediately associated with himself the other adopted son of Antoninus, who took the name of L. Verus. One treacherous year of peace gave the hope of undisturbed repose, under the beneficent sway which carried the maxims of a severe and humane philosophy into the administration of public affairs. Mild to all lighter delinquencies, but always ready to mitigate the severity of the law, the emperor was only inexorable to those more heinous offences which endanger the happiness of society. While the emperor himself superintended the course of justice, the senate resumed its ancient honors. In the second year of
 his reign, the horizon began to darken.

A.D. 162. During the reign of the first Antoninus, earthquakes which shook down some of the Asiatic cities, and fires which ravaged those of the West, had excited much alarm; but these calamities assumed a more dire and destructive character during the reign

¹ A modern writer, M. Ripault (*Hist. Philosophique de Marc Aurèle*) ascribes to this time the memorable passage of Tertullian's apology, — "*Existiment omnis publicæ cladis, omnis popularis incommodi, Christianos esse causam. Si Tiberis ascendit in mœnia, si Nilus non ascendit in arva, si cœlum stetit, si terra movit, si fames, si lues, statim Christianos ad leones.*" An older, more learned historian writes that "tout ce qui suit les cultes de l'empire s'élève de toutes parts contre les Chrétiens. On attribue à ce qu'on appelle leur impiété, le déchaînement des fléaux, sous lesquelles gémissent tous les hommes sans privilège ni exemption, sans distinction de religion" — Tillemont, *Hist. des Emp., Marc Aurèl.*

² Quadratus apud Xiphilin. *Antonin.* 3.

of Aurelius. Rome itself was first visited with a terrible inundation.¹ The Tiber swept away all the cattle in the neighborhood, threw down a great number of buildings; among the rest, the granaries and magazines of corn, which were chiefly situated on the banks of the river. This appalling event was followed by a famine, which pressed heavily on the poorer population of the capital. At the same time, disturbances took place in Britain. The Catti, a German tribe, ravaged Belgium; and the Parthian war, which commenced under most disastrous circumstances, the invasion of Syria, and the loss of three legions, demanded the presence of his colleague in the empire. Though the event was announced to be prosperous, yet intelligence of doubtful and hard-won victories seemed to intimate that the spell of Roman conquest was beginning to lose its power.²

After four years, Verus returned, bearing the trophies of victory, but, at the same time, the seeds of a calamity which outweighed all the barren honors which he had won on the shores of the Euphrates. His army was infected with a pestilence, which superstition ascribed to the plunder of a temple in Seleucia or Babylonia. The rapacious soldiers had opened a mystic coffer, inscribed with magical signs, from which issued a pestilential air, which laid waste the whole world. This fable is a vivid indication of the state of the public mind.³

A.D. 166.
Calamities of
the empire.

Capitol. M. Antonin. p. 168.

¹ "Sed in diebus Parthici belli, persecutiones Christianorum, quartâ jam post Neronem vice, in Asiâ et Galliâ præcepto ejus extiterunt, multique sanctorum martyrio coronati sunt." This loose language of Orosius (for the persecution in Gaul, if not in Asia, was much later than the Parthian war) appears to connect the calamities of Rome with the persecutions.

³ This was called the "annus calamitosus." There is a strange story in Capitolinus of an impostor who harangued the populace from the wild fig-tree

More rational observation traced the fatal malady from Ethiopia and Egypt to the Eastern army, which it followed from province to province, mouldering away its strength as it proceeded, even to the remote frontiers of Gaul and the northern shores of the Rhine. Italy felt its most dreadful ravages, and in Rome itself the dead bodies were transported out of the city, not on the decent bier, but heaped up in wagons. Famine aggravated the miseries, and perhaps increased the virulence, of the plague.¹ Still the hopes of peace began to revive the drooping mind; and flattering medals were struck, which promised the return of golden days. On a sudden, the empire was appalled with the intelligence of new wars in all quarters. The Moors laid waste the fertile provinces of Spain; a rebellion of shepherds withheld the harvests of Egypt from the capital. Their defeat only added to the dangerous glory of Avidius Cassius, who, before long, stood forth as a competitor for the empire. A vast confederacy of nations, from the frontiers of Gaul to the borders of Illyricum, comprehending some of the best known and most formidable of the German tribes, with others whose dissonant names were new to the Roman ears, had arisen with a simultaneous movement.² The armies were wasted with the Parthian campaigns, and the still more destructive plague.

The Marcomannic has been compared with the Second Punic War, though, at the time, even in the paroxysm of terror, the pride of Rome would

in the Campus Martius, and asserted that if, in throwing himself from the tree, he should be turned into a stork, fire would fall from heaven, and the *end of the world was at hand*: "*ignem de cœlo lapsurum finemque mundi affore diceret.*" As he fell, he loosed a stork from his bosom. Aurelius on his confession of the imposture, released him. — Cap. Anton. 13.

¹ Julius Cap., Ant. Phil. 21.

² See the list in Capitol. p. 200.

probably not have ennobled an irruption of barbarians, however formidable, by such a comparison. The presence of both the emperors was imperiously demanded. Marcus, indeed, lingered in Rome, probably to enroll the army (for which purpose he swept together recruits from all quarters, and even robbed the arena of its bravest gladiators), certainly to perform the most solemn and costly religious ceremonies. Every rite was celebrated which could propitiate the divine favor, or allay the popular fears. Priests were summoned from all quarters; foreign rites performed;¹ lustrations and funereal banquets for seven days purified the infected city. It was, no doubt, on this occasion that the unusual number of victims provoked the sarcastic wit which insinuated, that, if the emperor returned victorious, there would be a dearth of oxen.² Precisely at this time, the Christian

Christian
martyrdoms,
A.D. 166.

martyrologies date the commencement of the persecution under Aurelius. In Rome itself, Justin, the apologist of Christianity, either in the same or in the following year, ratified with his blood the sincerity of his belief in the doctrines for which he had abandoned the Gentile philosophy. His death is attributed to the jealousy of Crescens, a Cynic, whose audience had been drawn off by the more attractive tenets of the Christian Platonist. Justin was summoned before Rusticus, one of the philosophic teachers of Aurelius,

¹ "Peregrinos ritus impleverit." Such seems the uncontested reading in the Augustan history; yet the singular fact, that at such a period the emperor should introduce foreign rites, as well as the unusual expression, may raise a suspicion that some word with an opposite meaning is the genuine expression of the author.

² This early pasquinade was couched in the form of an address from the white oxen to the emperor: "If you conquer, we are undone:" Οἱ βόες οἱ λευκοὶ Μαρκῷ τῷ Καίσαρι [χαίρειν] Ἄν δὲ σὺ νικήσῃς, ἡμεῖς ἀπωλόμεθα. — *Amm. Marc. xxv. 4.*

the prefect of the city, and commanded to perform sacrifice. On his refusal, and open avowal of his Christianity, he was scourged, and put to death. It is by no means improbable, that, during this crisis of religious terror, mandates should have been issued to the provinces to imitate the devotion of the capital, and everywhere to appease the offended gods by sacrifice. Such an edict, though not designating them by name, would in its effects, and perhaps in intention, expose the Christians to the malice of their enemies. Even if the provincial governors were left of their own accord to imitate the example of the emperor, their own zeal or loyalty would induce them to fall in with the popular current. The lofty humanity which would be superior at once to superstition, to interest, and to the desire of popularity, and which would neglect the opportunity of courting the favor of the emperor and the populace, would be a rare and singular virtue upon the tribunal of a provincial ruler.

The persecution raged with the greatest violence in Asia Minor. It was here that the new edicts were promulgated, so far departing from the humane regulations of the former emperors, that the prudent apologists venture to doubt their emanating from the imperial authority.¹ By these rescripts, the delators were again let loose, and were stimulated by the gratification of their rapacity out of the forfeited goods of the Christian victims of persecution, as well as of their revenge.

The fame of the aged Polycarp, whose death the sorrowing church of Smyrna related in an epistle to the Christian community at Philomelium or Philadelphia, which is still extant, and bears every mark of

¹ Melito apud Euseb., H. E. iv. 20.

authenticity,¹ has obscured that of the other victims of Heathen malice or superstition. Of these victims, the names of two only have survived; one who manfully endured, the other who timidly apostatized, in the hour of trial. Germanicus appeared; was forced to descend into the arena; he fought gallantly, until the merciful proconsul entreated him to consider his time of life. He then provoked the tardy beast, and in an instant obtained his immortality. The impression on the wondering people was that of indignation rather than of pity. The cry was redoubled, "Away with the godless! Let Polycarp be apprehended!" The second, Quintus, a Phrygian, had boastfully excited the rest to throw themselves in the way of the persecution. He descended, in his haste, into the arena: the first sight of the wild beasts so overcame his hollow courage, that he consented to sacrifice.

Polycarp was the most distinguished Christian of the East; he had heard the apostle St. John; he had long presided, with the most saintly dignity, over the see of Smyrna. Polycarp neither ostentatiously exposed himself, nor declined such measures for security as might be consistent with his character. He consented to retire into a neighboring village, from which, on the intelligence of the approach of the officers, he retreated to another. His place of concealment being betrayed by two slaves, whose confession had been extorted by torture, he exclaimed, "The will of God be done!" ordered food to be prepared for the officers of justice; and requested time for prayer, in which he spent two hours. He was placed upon an ass, and, on a day of great public concourse, conducted

¹ In *Cotelerii Patres Apostolici*, ii. 195.

towards the town. He was met by Herod the Irenarch and his father Nicetas, who took the bishop, with considerate respect, into their own carriage, and vainly endeavored to persuade him to submit to the two tests by which the Christians were tried,—the salutation of the emperor by the title of Lord, and sacrifice. On his determined refusal, their compassion gave place to contumely: he was hastily thrust out of the chariot, and conducted to the crowded stadium. On the entrance of the old man upon the public scene, the excited devotion of the Christian spectators imagined that they heard a voice from heaven, “Polycarp, be firm!” The Heathen, in their vindictive fury, shouted aloud, that Polycarp had been apprehended. The merciful proconsul entreated him, in respect to his old age, to disguise his name. He proclaimed aloud that he was Polycarp: the trial proceeded. “Swear,” they said, “by the Genius of Cæsar; retract, and say, ‘Away with the godless!’” The old man gazed in sorrow at the frantic and raging benches of the spectators, rising above each other, and, with his eyes uplifted to heaven, said, “Away with the godless!” The proconsul urged him further: “Swear, and I release thee; blaspheme Christ.” —“Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and He has never done me wrong: how can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?” The proconsul again commanded him to swear by the Genius of Cæsar. Polycarp replied by avowing himself a Christian, and by requesting a day to be appointed on which he might explain before the proconsul the blameless tenets of Christianity. “Persuade the people to consent,” replied the compassionate but overawed ruler. “We owe respect to authority; to thee I will explain

the reasons of my conduct; to the populace I will make no explanation." The old man knew too well the ferocious passions raging in their minds, which it had been vain to attempt to allay by the rational arguments of Christianity. The proconsul threatened to expose him to the wild beasts. "'Tis well for me to be speedily released from this life of misery." He threatened to burn him alive. "I fear not the fire that burns for a moment: thou knowest not that which burns for ever and ever." The Christian's countenance was full of peace and joy, even when the herald advanced into the midst of the assemblage, and thrice proclaimed, "Polycarp has professed himself a Christian!" The Jews and Heathens (for the former were in great numbers, and especially infuriated against the Christians) replied with an overwhelming shout, "This is the teacher of all Asia, the overthrower of our gods, who has perverted so many from sacrifice and the adoration of the gods!" They demanded of the Asiarch, the president of the games, instantly to let loose a lion upon Polycarp. The Asiarch excused himself by alleging that the games were over. A general cry arose that Polycarp should be burned alive. The Jews were again as vindictively active as the Heathens in collecting the fuel of the baths, and other combustibles, to raise up a hasty yet capacious funeral pile. He was speedily unrobed; he requested not to be nailed to the stake; he was only bound to it.

The calm and unostentatious prayer of Polycarp may be considered as embodying the sentiments of the Christians of that period. "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved and ever-blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowl

edge of Thee; the God of angels, powers, and of every creature and of the whole race of the righteous who live before Thee! I thank Thee that Thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of thy martyrs, and drink of Christ's cup, for the resurrection to eternal life, both of body and soul, in the incorruptibleness of the Holy Spirit; among whom may I be admitted this day, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as Thou, O true and faithful God! hast prepared and foreshown and accomplished. Wherefore I praise Thee for all Thy mercies; I bless Thee; I glorify Thee, with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Spirit, be glory now and for ever."

The fire was kindled in vain. It arose curving like an arch around the serene victim, or, like a sail swelling with the wind, left the body unharmed. To the sight of the Christians, he resembled a treasure of gold or silver (an allusion to the gold tried in the furnace); and delicious odors, as of myrrh or frankincense, breathed from his body. An executioner was sent in to despatch the victim; his side was pierced, and blood enough flowed from the aged body to extinguish the flames immediately around him.¹

The whole of this narrative has the genuine energy of truth: the prudent yet resolute conduct of the aged bishop, the calm and dignified expostulation of the governor, the wild fury of the populace, the Jews eagerly seizing the opportunity of renewing their unslaked hatred to the Christian name, are described

¹ The Greek account adds a dove, which soared from his body, as it were his innocent departing soul. For *περίστερα*, however, has been very ingeniously substituted *ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ*. See Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, i. 316. Perhaps *περὶ στήνῃ*, "around the chest." — Ruinart.

with the simplicity of nature. The supernatural part of the transaction is no more than may be ascribed to the high-wrought imagination of the Christian spectators, deepening every casual incident into a wonder, — the voice from heaven, heard only by Christian ears; the flame from the hastily piled wood, arching over the unharmed body; the grateful odors, not impossibly from aromatic woods, which were used to warm the baths of the more luxurious, and which were collected for the sudden execution; the effusion of blood, which might excite wonder from the decrepit frame of a man at least a hundred years old.¹ Even the vision of Polycarp himself,² by which he was forewarned of his approaching fate, was not unlikely to arise before his mind at that perilous crisis. Polycarp closed the nameless train of Asiatic martyrs.³

Some few years after, the city of Smyrna was visited with a terrible earthquake; a generous sympathy was displayed by the inhabitants of the neighboring cities; provisions were poured in from all quarters; homes were offered to the houseless, carriages furnished to convey the infirm and the children from the scene of ruin. They received the fugitives as if they had been their parents or children. The rich and the poor vied in the offices of charity; and, in the words of the Grecian sophist, thought that they were receiving rather than conferring a favor.⁴ A Christian historian

¹ According to the great master of nature, Lady Macbeth's diseased memory is haunted with a similar circumstance at the murder of Duncan. "Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" — *Macbeth*, act v. s. 1.

² The difficulty of accurately reconciling the vision with its fulfilment has greatly perplexed the writers who insist on its preternatural origin. — Jortin, p. 307.

³ Κατέπαυσε τὸν διωγμὸν.

⁴ Tillemont, *Hist. des Emp.* t. ii. p. 687. The philosopher Aristides wrote an oration on this event.

may be excused if he discerns in this humane conduct the manifest progress of Christian benevolence; and that benevolence, if not unfairly ascribed to the influence of Christianity, is heightened by the recollection that the sufferers were those whose amphitheatre had so recently been stained with the blood of the aged martyr. If, instead of beholding the retributive hand of divine vengeance in the smouldering ruins of the city, the Christians hastened to alleviate the common miseries of Christian and of Pagan with equal zeal and liberality, it is impossible not to trace at once the extraordinary revolution in the sentiments of mankind, and the purity of the Christianity which was thus superior to those passions which have so often been fatal to its perfection.

At this period of enthusiastic excitement, — of Superstition on the one hand, returning in unreasoning terror to its forsaken gods, and working itself up by every means to a consolatory feeling of the divine protection; of Religion, on the other, relying in humble confidence on the protection of an all-ruling Providence; when the religious parties were, it might seem, aggrandizing their rival deities, and tracing their conflicting powers throughout the whole course of human affairs, — to every mind each extraordinary event would be deeply colored with supernatural influence; and, whenever any circumstance really bore a providential or miraculous appearance, it would be ascribed by each party to the favoring interposition of its own god.

Such was the celebrated event which was long current in Christian history as the miracle of the thundering legion.¹ Heathen historians, medals still extant,

¹ See Moyle's Works, vol. ii. Compare Routh, *Reliq Sacrae*, i. 153, with authors quoted.

and the column which bears the name of Antoninus at Rome, concur with Christian tradition in commemorating the extraordinary deliverance of the Roman army, during the war with the German nations, from a situation of the utmost peril and difficulty. If the Christians at any time served in the imperial armies;¹ if military service was a question, as seems extremely probable, which divided the early Christians,²—some considering it too closely connected with the idolatrous practices of an oath to the fortunes of Cæsar and with the worship of the standards, which were to the rest of the army, as it were, the household gods of battle; while others were less rigid in their practice, and forgot their piety in their allegiance to their sovereign and their patriotism to their country,—at no time were the Christians more likely to overcome their scruples than at this critical period. The armies were recruited by unprecedented means; and many Christians, who would before have hesitated to enroll themselves, might less reluctantly submit to the conscription, or even think themselves justified in engaging in what appeared necessary and defensive warfare. There might then have been many Christians in the armies of M. Aurelius; but that they formed a whole separate legion is manifestly the fiction of a later age. In the campaign of the year of our Lord 174, the army advanced incautiously into a country entirely without water; and, in this faint and enfeebled state, was exposed to a formidable attack of the whole barbarian force. Suddenly, at their hour of most extreme distress, a copious and re-

¹ Tertullian, in a passage already quoted, states distinctly, "*militamus vobiscum.*"

² Neander has developed this notion with his usual ability, in this part of his History of the Church.

freshing rain came down, which supplied their wants; and, while their half-recruited strength was still ill able to oppose the onset of the enemy, a tremendous storm, with lightning, and hailstones of an enormous size, drove full upon the adversary, and rendered his army an easy conquest to the reviving Romans.¹ Of this awful yet seasonable interposition, the whole army acknowledged the preternatural, the divine origin. By those of darker superstition, it was attributed to the incantations of the magician Arnuphis, who controlled the elements to the service of the emperor. The medals struck on the occasion, and the votive column erected by Marcus himself, render homage to the established deities, to Mercury and to Jupiter.² The more rational Pagans, with a flattery which received the suffrage of admiring posterity, gave the honor to the virtues of Marcus, which demanded this signal favor from approving Heaven.³ The Christian, of course, looked alone to that one Almighty God whose providence ruled the whole course of nature, and saw the secret operation of his own prayers meeting with the favorable acceptance of the Most High.⁴ “While the Pagans ascribed the honor of this deliver-

¹ In the year after this victory (A.D. 175), the formidable rebellion of Avidius Cassius disturbed the East, and added to the perils and embarrassments of the empire.

² Mercury, according to Pagi, appears on one of the coins relating to this event. Compare Reading's note in Routh, *loc. cit.*

³ Lampridius (in Vit.) attributes the victory to the Chaldeans. Marcus, De Seipso (lib. i. c. 6), allows that he had the magician Arnuphis in his army.

Chaldæa mago seu carmina ritu
Armavere Deos, seu, quod reor, omne Tonantis
Obsequium Marci mores potuere merari.

Claud., vi. Cons. Hou

⁴ “In Jovis nomine Deo nostro testimonium reddidit.” — Tertullian, Ad Scapulam, p. 20. Euseb., Hist Eccl. v. 5.

ance to their own Jove," writes Tertullian, "they unknowingly bore testimony to the Christians' God."

The latter end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius¹ was signalized by another scene of martyrdom, in a part of the empire far distant from that where persecution had before raged with the greatest violence, though not altogether disconnected from it by the original descent of the sufferers.²

The Christians of Lyons and Vienne appear to have been a religious colony from Asia Minor or Phrygia, and to have maintained a close correspondence with those distant communities. There is something remarkable in the connection between these regions and the East. To this district the two Herods, Archelaus and Herod Antipas, were successively banished; and it is singular enough, that Pontius Pilate, after his recall from Syria, was exiled to the same neighborhood.

Martyrs of
Vienne.
A.D. 177.

There now appears a Christian community, corresponding in Greek with the mother Church.³ It is by no means improbable, that a kind of Jewish settlement of the attendants on the banished sovereigns of Judæa might have been formed in the neighborhood of Vienne and Lyons, and maintained a friendly, no doubt a mercantile connection with their opulent brethren of Asia Minor, perhaps through the port of Marseilles. Though Christianity does not appear to have pene-

¹ If I had determined to force the events of this period into an accordance with my own view of the persecutions of M. Aurelius, I might have adopted the chronology of Dodwell, who assigns the martyrs of Lyons to the year 167; but the evidence seems in favor of the later date, 177. See Mosheim. Lardner, who commands authority, if not by his critical sagacity, by his scrupulous honesty, says, "Nor do I expect that any learned man, who has a concern for his reputation as a writer, should attempt a direct confutation of this opinion." — Works, 4to edit. i. 360.

² Euseb., Hist. Ecc. v. 1.

³ Epistola Viennensium et Lugdunensium, in Routh, i. 265.

trated into Gaul till rather a late period,¹ it may have travelled by the same course, and have been propagated in the Jewish settlement by converts from Phrygia or Asia Minor. Its Jewish origin is perhaps confirmed by its adherence to the Judæo-Christian tenet of abstinence from blood.²

The commencement of this dreadful, though local persecution was an ebullition of popular fury. It was about the period when the German war, which had slumbered during some years of precarious peace, again threatened to disturb the repose of the empire. Southern Gaul, though secure beyond the Rhine, was yet at no great distance from the incursions of the German tribes; and it is possible that personal apprehensions might mingle with the general fanatic terror, which exasperated the Heathens against their Christian fellow-citizens. The Christians were on a sudden exposed to a general attack of the populace. Clamors soon grew to personal violence: they were struck, dragged about the streets, plundered, stoned, shut up in their houses, until the more merciful hostility of the ruling authorities gave orders for their arrest and imprisonment until the arrival of the governor. One man of birth and rank, Vettius Epagathus, boldly undertook their defence against the vague charges of atheism and impiety: he was charged with being himself a Christian, and fearlessly admitted the honorable accusation. The greater part of the Christian community adhered resolutely to their belief; the few whose courage failed in the hour of trial, and who purchased their security

¹ "Serius Alpes transgressa" is the expression of a Christian writer, Sulpicius Severus.

² "How can those eat infants to whom it is not lawful to eat the blood of brutes?" Compare, however, Tertullian's Apology, ch. 9, and Origen contra Celsum, viii.; from whence it appears that this abstinence was more general among the early Christians.

by shameful submission, nevertheless did not abandon their more courageous and suffering brethren, but, at considerable personal danger, continued to alleviate their sufferings by kindly offices. Some Heathen slaves were at length compelled, by the dread of torture, to confirm the odious charges which were so generally advanced against the Christians, — banquets on human flesh, promiscuous and incestuous concubinage, Thyes-tean feasts, and Œdipodean weddings. The extorted confessions of these miserable men exasperated even the more moderate of the Heathens, while the ferocious populace had now free scope for their sanguinary cruelty. The more distinguished victims were Sanctus, a deacon of Vienne; a new convert named Maturus, and Attalus, of Phrygian descent, from the city of Pergamus. They were first tortured by means too horrible to describe, — if, without such description, the barbarity of the persecutors, and the heroic endurance of the Christian martyrs, could be justly represented. Many perished in the suffocating air of the noisome dungeons; many had their feet strained to dislocation in the stocks; the more detested victims, after all other means of torture were exhausted, had hot plates of iron placed upon the most sensitive parts of their bodies.

Among these victims was the aged Bishop of Lyons, Pothinus, now in his ninetieth year, who died in prison after two days from the ill usage which he had received from the populace. His feeble body had failed, but his mind remained intrepid: when the frantic rabble environed him with their insults, and demanded, with contumelious cries, "Who is the God of the Christians?" he calmly replied, "Wert thou worthy, thou shouldst know."

But the amphitheatre was the great public scene of popular barbarity and of Christian endurance. The martyrs were exposed to wild beasts (which, however, do not seem to have been permitted to despatch their miserable victims), and made to sit in a heated iron chair till their flesh reeked upwards with an offensive stench.

A rescript of the emperor, instead of allaying the popular frenzy, gave ample license to its uncontrolled violence. Those who denied the faith were to be released; those who persisted in it, condemned to death.

But the most remarkable incident in this fearful and afflicting scene, and the most characteristic of the social change which Christianity had begun to work, was this, — that the chief honors of this memorable martyrdom were assigned to a female, a slave. Even the Christians themselves scarcely appear aware of the deep and universal influence of their own sublime doctrines. The mistress of Blandina, herself a martyr, trembled lest the weak body, and still more the debased condition, of the lowly associate in her trial, might betray her to criminal concession. Blandina shared in all the most excruciating sufferings of the most distinguished victims; she equalled them in the calm and unpretending superiority to every pain which malice, irritated and licensed, as it were, to exceed, if it were possible, its own barbarities on the person of a slave, could invent. She was selected by the peculiar vengeance of the persecutors, whose astonishment probably increased their malignity, for new and unprecedented tortures, which she bore with the same equable magnanimity.

Blandina was first led forth with Sanctus, Maturus, and Attalus; and, no doubt, the ignominy of their

public exposure was intended to be heightened by their association with a slave. The wearied executioners wondered that her life could endure under the horrid succession of torments which they inflicted. Blandina's only reply was, "I am a Christian, and no wickedness is practised among us."

In the amphitheatre, she was suspended to a stake, while the combatants, Maturus and Sanctus, derived vigor and activity from the tranquil prayers which she uttered in her agony; and the less savage wild beasts kept aloof from their prey. A third time she was brought forth, for a public exhibition of suffering, with a youth of fifteen, named Ponticus. During every kind of torment, her language and her example animated the courage and confirmed the endurance of the boy, who at length expired under the torture. Blandina rejoiced at the approach of death, as if she had been invited to a wedding banquet, and not thrown to the wild beasts. She was at length released. After she had been scourged, placed in the iron chair, enclosed in a net, and, now in a state of insensibility, tossed by a bull, some more merciful barbarian transpierced her with a sword. The remains of all these martyrs, after lying long unburied, were cast into the Rhone, in order to mock, and render still more improbable, their hopes of a resurrection.

CHAPTER VIII.

Fourth Period. Christianity under the Successors of M. Aurelius.

SUCH was the state of Christianity at the commencement of the fourth period between its first promulgation and its establishment under Constantine. The golden days of the Roman empire had already begun to darken, and closed for ever with the reign of Marcus the Philosopher. The empire of the world became the prize of bold adventure, or the precarious gift of a lawless soldiery. During little more than a century, from the accession of Commodus to that of Diocletian, more than twenty emperors (not to mention the pageants of a day, and the competitors for the throne who retained a temporary authority over some single province) flitted like shadows along the tragic scene of the imperial palace. A long line of military adventurers, often strangers to the name, to the race, to the language, of Rome,—Africans and Syrians, Arabs and Goths,—seized the quickly shifting sceptre of the world. The change of sovereign was almost always a change of dynasty; or, by some strange fatality, every attempt to re-establish an hereditary succession was thwarted by the vices or imbecility of the second generation. M. Aurelius is succeeded by the brutal Commodus; the vigorous and able Severus, by the fratricide Caracalla. One of the imperial historians has made the melancholy observation, that, of the

Fourth
period.

Rapid suc-
cession of
emperors.
A.D. 180
to 284.

great men of Rome, scarcely one left a son the heir of his virtues: they had either died without offspring, or had left such heirs, that it had been better for mankind if they had died leaving no posterity.¹

In the weakness and insecurity of the throne lay the strength and safety of Christianity. During such a period, no systematic policy was pursued in any of the leading internal interests of the empire. It was a government of temporary expedients, of individual passions. The first and commanding object of each succeeding head of a dynasty was to secure his contested throne, and to centre upon himself the wavering or divided allegiance of the provinces. Many of the emperors were deeply and inextricably involved in foreign wars, and had no time to devote to the social changes within the pale of the empire. The tumults or the terrors of the German or Gothic or Persian inroad effected a perpetual diversion from the slow and silent internal aggressions of Christianity. The frontiers constantly and imperiously demanded the presence of the emperor, and left him no leisure to attend to the feeble remonstrances of the neglected priesthood. The dangers of the civil absorbed those of the religious constitution. Thus Christianity had another century of regular and progressive advancement to arm itself for the inevitable collision with the temporal authority, till, in the reign of Diocletian, it had grown far beyond the power of the most unlimited and arbitrary despotism to arrest its invincible progress; and Constantine, whatever the motives of his conversion, no doubt

*Insecurity
of the
throne fa-
vorable
to Chris-
tianity.*

¹ "Neminem prope magnorum virorum optimum et utilem filium reliquisse satis claret. Denique aut sine liberis viri interierunt, aut tales habuerunt plerique, ut melius fuerit de rebus humanis sine posteritate discedere." — Spartiani Severus, *Aug. Hist.* p. 360.

adopted a wise and judicious policy in securing the alliance of, rather than continuing the strife with, an adversary which divided the wealth, the intellect, if not the property and the population, of the empire.

The persecutions which took place during this interval were the hasty consequences of the personal hostility of the emperors, not the mature and deliberate policy of a regular and permanent government. In general, the vices and the detestable characters of the persecutors would tend to vindicate the innocence of Christianity, and to enlist the sympathies of mankind in its favor, rather than to deepen the general animosity. Christianity, which had received the respectful homage of Alexander Severus, could not lose in public estimation by being exposed to the gladiatorial fury of Maximin. Some of the emperors were almost as much strangers to the gods as to the people and to the senate of Rome. They seemed to take a reckless delight in violating the ancient majesty of the Roman religion. Foreign superstitions, almost equally new, and scarcely less offensive to the general sentiment, received the public, the pre-eminent homage of the emperor. Commodus, though the Grecian Hercules was at once his model, his type, and his deity, was an ardent votary of the Isiac mysteries; and at the Syrian worship of the Sun, in all its foreign and Oriental pomp, Elagabalus commanded the attendance of the trembling senate.

If Marcus Aurelius was, as it were, the last effort of expiring Polytheism, or rather of ancient philosophy, to produce a perfect man according to the highest ideal conception of human reason, the brutal Commodus might appear to retrograde to the

Causes of
persecu-
tions
during this
period.

Commodus.
A.D. 180 to
193.

savage periods of society. Commodus was a gladiator on the throne; and if the mind, humanized either by the milder spirit of the times or by the incipient influence of Christianity, had begun to turn in distaste from the horrible spectacles which flooded the arena with human carnage, the disgust would be immeasurably deepened by the appearance of the emperor as the chief actor in these sanguinary scenes. Even Nero's theatrical exhibitions had something of the elegance of a polished age: the actor in one of the noble tragedies of ancient Greece, or even the accomplished musician, might derogate from the dignity of an emperor, yet might, in some degree, excuse the unseemliness of his pursuits by their intellectual character. But the amusements and public occupations of Commodus had long been consigned by the general contempt and abhorrence to the meanest of mankind, to barbarians and slaves, and were as debasing to the civilized man as unbecoming in the head of the empire.¹ The courage which Commodus displayed in confronting the hundred lions which were let loose in the arena, and fell by his shafts (though in fact the imperial person was carefully guarded against real danger), and the skill with which he clave with an arrow the slender neck of the giraffe, might have commanded the admiration of a flattering court. But when he appeared as a gladiator, gloried in the acts, and condescended to receive the disgraceful pay, of a profession so infamous as to degrade for ever the man of rank or character who had been forced upon the stage by the tyranny of former emperors, the courtiers, who had been bred in the severe and dignified school of the Philosopher, must have recoiled with shame, and

¹ *Ælii Lampridii, Commodus, in August. Hist.*

approved, if not envied, the more rigid principles of the Christians, which kept them aloof from such degrading spectacles. Commodus was an avowed proselyte of the Egyptian religion; but his favorite god was the Grecian Hercules. He usurped the attributes, and placed his own head on the statues, of this deity, which was the impersonation, as it were, of brute force and corporeal strength. But a deity which might command adoration in a period of primeval barbarism, when man lives in a state of perilous warfare with the beasts of the forest, in a more intellectual age sinks to his proper level. He might be the appropriate god of a gladiator, but not of a Roman emperor.¹

Every thing which tended to desecrate the popular religion to the feelings of the more enlightened and intellectual must have strengthened the cause of Christianity; the more the weaker parts of Paganism, and those most alien to the prevailing sentiment of the times, were obtruded on the public view, the more they must have contributed to the advancement of that faith which was rapidly attaining to the full growth of a rival to the established religion. The subsequent deification of Commodus, under the reign of Severus, in wanton resentment against the senate,² prevented his odious memory from sinking into oblivion. His insults upon the more rational part of the existing religion could no longer be forgotten, as merely ema-

¹ In the new fragments of Dion Cassius, recovered by M. Mai, there is an epigram pointed against the assumption of the attributes of Hercules by Commodus. The emperor had placed his own head on the colossal statue of Hercules, with the inscription, "Lucius Commodus Hercules."

Διὸς παῖς Καλλίνκος Ἡρακλῆς,

Ὅνκ εἰμὶ Λεύκιος, ἀλλ' ἀναγκάζουσι με.

The point is not very clear, but it seems to be a protest of the god against being confounded with the emperor. — Mai, *Fragm. Vatic.* ii. 225.

² Spartiani Severus, *Hist. Aug.* p. 345.

nating from his personal character. Commodus advanced into a god, after his death, brought disrepute upon the whole Polytheism of the empire. Christianity was perpetually, as it were, at hand, and ready to profit by every favorable juncture. By a singular accident, the ruffian Commodus was personally less inimically disposed to the Christians than his wise and amiable father. His favorite concubine, Marcia, in some manner connected with the Christians, mitigated the barbarity of his temper, and restored to the persecuted Christians a long and unbroken peace, which had been perpetually interrupted by the hostility of the populace, and the edicts of the Government in the former reign. Christianity had no doubt been rigidly repelled from the precincts of the court during the life of Marcus, by the predominance of the philosophic faction. From this period, a Christian party occasionally appears in Rome. Many families of distinction and opulence professed Christian tenets, and the religion is sometimes found in connection with the imperial family. Still Rome, to the last, seems to have been the centre of the Pagan interest, though other causes will hereafter appear for this curious fact in the conflict of the two religions.

Severus wielded the sceptre of the world with the vigor of the older empire. But his earlier years were occupied in the establishment of his power over the hostile factions of his competitors, and by his Eastern wars; his latter, by the settlement of the remote province of Britain.¹ Severus was at one time the protector, at another the persecutor, of Christianity. Local circumstances appear to have influenced his conduct, on both occasions, to

Reign of
Severus.
A.D. 194
to 210.

¹ Compare Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, iii. part 1, p. 146.

the Christian party. A Christian named Proculus, a dependent, probably, upon his favorite freed slave Evodus, had been so fortunate as to restore Severus to health by anointing him with oil, and was received into the imperial family, in which he retained his honorable situation till his death. Not improbably through the same connection, a Christian nurse and

Infancy of Caracalla. a Christian preceptor formed the disposition of the young Caracalla; and, till the natural ferocity of his character ripened under the fatal influence of jealous ambition, fraternal hatred, and unbounded power, the gentleness of his manners and the sweetness of his temper enchanted and attached his family, his friends, the senate, and the people of Rome. The people beheld with satisfaction the infant pupil of Christianity turning aside his head, and weeping at the barbarity of the ordinary public spectacles, in which criminals were exposed to wild beasts.¹ The Christian interest at the court repressed the occasional outbursts of popular animosity: many Christians of rank and distinction enjoyed the avowed favor of the emperor. Their security may partly be attributed to their calm determination not to mingle themselves up

Peaceful conduct of the Christians. with the contending factions for the empire. During the conflict of parties, they had refused to espouse the cause of either Niger or Albinus. Retired within themselves, they rendered their prompt and cheerful obedience to the ruling emperor. The implacable vengeance which Severus wreaked on the senate for their real or suspected inclination to the party of Albinus, his remorseless execution of so many of the noblest of the aristocracy, may have placed in a stronger light the happier fortune,

¹ Spartian., Anton. Caracalla, p. 404.

and commended the unimpeachable loyalty, of the Christians. The provincial governors, as usual, reflected the example of the court: some adopted merciful expedients to avoid the necessity of carrying the laws into effect against those Christians who were denounced before their tribunals; while the more venal humanity of others extorted a considerable profit from the Christians for their security. The unlawful religion, in many places, purchased its peace at the price of a regular tax, which was paid by other illegal, and mostly infamous, professions. This traffic with the authorities was sternly denounced by some of the more ardent believers, as degrading to the religion, and as an ignominious barter of the hopes and glories of martyrdom.¹

Such was the flourishing and peaceful state of Christianity during the early part of the reign of Severus. In the East, at a later period, he embraced a sterner policy. During the conflict with Niger, the Samaritans had espoused the losing, the Jews the successful, party. The edicts of Severus were, on the whole, favorable to the Jews; but the prohibition to circumcise proselytes was re-enacted during his residence in Syria, in the tenth year of his reign. The same prohibition against the admission of new proselytes was extended to the Christians. But this edict may have been intended to allay the violence of the hostile factions in Syria. Of the persecution under Severus, there are few, if any, traces in the West.²

Persecution
in the East.

A.D. 202.

Christianity
not persecuted in the
West.

¹ "Sed quid non timiditas persuadebit, quasi et fugere scriptura permittat, et redimere præcipiat. . . . Nescio dolendum an erubescendum sit cum in matricibus beneficiariorum et curiosorum, inter tabernarios et lanios et fures balnearum et aleones et lenones, Christiani quoque vectigales continentur." — Tertull., *De Fugâ*, c. 13.

² "Nous ne trouvons rien de considérable touchant les martyrs que la per-

It is confined to Syria, perhaps to Cappadocia, to Egypt, and to Africa; and, in the latter provinces, appears as the act of hostile governors, proceeding upon the existing laws, rather than the consequence of any recent edict of the emperor. The Syrian Eusebius may have exaggerated local acts of oppression, of which the sad traces were recorded in his native country, into a general persecution: he admits that

Probable
causes.

Alexandria was the chief scene of Christian suffering. The date and the scene of the persecution may lend a clue to its origin. From Syria,

Egypt.

the emperor, exactly at this time, proceeded to Egypt. He surveyed, with wondering interest, the monuments of Egyptian glory and of Egyptian superstition,¹ the temples of Memphis, the Pyramids, the Labyrinth, the Memnonium. The plague alone prevented him from continuing his excursions into Ethiopia. The dark and relentless mind of Severus appears to have been strongly impressed with the religion of Serapis. In either character, as the great Pantheistic deity, which absorbed the attributes and functions of all the more ancient gods of Egypt, or with his more limited attributes, as the Pluto of their mythology, the lord of the realm of departed spirits, Serapis² was likely to captivate the imagination of Severus, and to suit those gloomier moods in which he delighted in brooding over the secrets of futurity; and, having realized the proud prognostics of greatness, which his youth had watched with hope, now began to dwell on the darker omens of decline and

sécution de Sévère a pu faire à Rome et en Italie." — Tillemont. St. Andeole, and the other martyrs in Gaul (Tillemont, p. 160), are of more than suspicious authenticity.

¹ Spartian., Hist. Aug. p. 553.

² Compare De Guigniaut, Sérapis et son Origine.

dissolution.¹ The hour of imperial favor was likely to be seized by the Egyptian priesthood to obtain the mastery and to wreak their revenge on this new foreign religion, which was making such rapid progress throughout the provinces and the whole of Africa. Whether or not the emperor actually authorized the persecution, his countenance would strengthen the Pagan interest, and encourage the obsequious prefect² in adopting violent measures. Lætus would be vindicating the religion of the emperor in asserting the superiority of Serapis, and the superiority of Serapis could be by no means so effectually asserted as by the oppression of his most powerful adversaries. Alexandria was the ripe and pregnant soil of religious feud and deadly animosity. Three hostile parties divided the city, — the Jews, the Pagans, and the Christians. They were perpetually blending and modifying each other's doctrines, and forming schools in which Judaism allegorized itself into Platonism, and Platonism, having assimilated itself to the higher Egyptian mythology, soared into Christianity; and thus Platonic Christianity, from a religion, became a mystic philosophy. They all awaited, nevertheless, the signal for persecution, and for license to draw off in sanguinary factions, and to settle the controversies of the schools by bloody tumults in the streets.³ The perpetual syn-

¹ Spartian had the advantage of consulting the autobiography of the emperor Severus. Had time but spared us the original, and taken the whole Augustan history in exchange!

² His name was Lætus. — Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* vi. 2.

³ Leonidas, the father of Origen, perished in this persecution. Origen was kept away from joining him in his imprisonment, and, if possible, in his martyrdom, only by the prudent stratagem of his mother, who concealed all his clothes. The boy of seventeen sent a letter to his father, entreating him not to allow his parental affection for himself and his six brothers to stand in his way of obtaining the martyr's crown. — Euseb. vi. 2. The property of Leonidas was confiscated to the imperial treasury. — *Ibid.*

cretism of opinions, instead of leading to peace and charity, seemed to inflame the deadly animosity; and the philosophical spirit, which attempted to blend all the higher doctrines into a lofty Eclectic system, had no effect in harmonizing the minds of the different sects to mutual toleration and amity. It was now the triumph of Paganism. The controversy with Christianity was carried on by burning the priests and torturing the virgins, until the catechetical or elementary schools of learning, by which the Alexandrian Christians trained up their pupils for the reception of their more mysterious doctrines, were deserted. The young Origen alone labored, with indefatigable and successful activity, to supply the void caused by the general desertion of the persecuted teachers.¹

The African prefect followed the example of Lætus in Egypt. In no part of the Roman empire
Africa. had Christianity taken more deep and permanent root than in the province of Africa, then crowded with rich and populous cities, and forming, with Egypt, the granary of the Western world; but which many centuries of Christian feud, Vandal invasion, and Mohammedan barbarism, have blasted to a thinly peopled desert. Up to this period, this secluded region had gone on advancing in its uninterrupted course of civilization. Since the battle of Thapsus, the African province had stood aloof from the tumults and desolation which attended the changes in the imperial dynasty. As yet, it had raised no competitor for the empire, though Severus, the ruling monarch, was of African descent. The single legion, which was considered adequate to protect the remote tranquillity of the province from the occasional incursions of the

¹ Euseb., Hist. Eccl. vi. 2.

Moorish tribes, had been found sufficient for its purpose. The Paganism of the African cities was probably weaker than in other parts of the empire. It had no ancient and sacred associations with national pride. The new cities had raised new temples to gods foreign to the region. The religion of Carthage,¹ if it had not entirely perished with the final destruction of the city, maintained but a feeble hold upon the Italianized inhabitants. The Carthage of the empire was a Roman city. If Christianity tended to mitigate the fierce spirit of the inhabitants of these burning regions, it acquired itself a depth and impassioned vehemence which perpetually broke through all restraints of moderation, charity, and peace. From Tertullian to Augustine, the climate seems to be working into the language, into the essence of Christianity. Here disputes maddened into feuds; and feuds, which in other countries were allayed by time, or died away of themselves, grew into obstinate, implacable, and irreconcilable factions.

African Christianity had no communion with the dreamy and speculative genius of the East. It sternly rejected the wild and poetic imper-
African Christianity.
 sonations, the daring cosmogonies, of the Gnostic sects: it was severe, simple, practical, in its creed; it governed by its strong and imperious hold upon the feelings, by profound and agitating emotion. It eagerly received the rigid asceticism of the anti-materialist system, while it disdained the fantastic theories by which that system accounted for the origin of evil.

¹ Compare Munter, *Relig. der Carthager*. The worship of the *Dea cœlestis*, the Queen of Heaven, should perhaps be excepted. See, forward, the reign of Elagabalus. Even in the fifth century, the Queen of Heaven, according to Salvian (*De Gubernatione Dei*, lib. viii.), shared with Christ the worship of Carthage.

The imagination had another office than that of following out its own fantastic creations: it spoke directly to the fears and to the passions; it delighted in realizing the terrors of the final Judgment; in arraying, in the most appalling language, the gloomy mysteries of future retribution. This character appears in the dark splendor of Tertullian's writings; engages him in contemptuous and relentless warfare against the Gnostic opinions, and their latest and most dangerous champion, Marcion; till, at length, it hardens into the severe yet simpler enthusiasm of Montanism. It appears, allied with the stern assertion of ecclesiastical order and sacerdotal domination, in the earnest and zealous Cyprian; it is still manifestly working, though in a chastened and loftier form, in the deep and impassioned, but comprehensive mind of Augustine.

Tertullian alone belongs to the present period; and Tertullian is, perhaps, the representative and the perfect type of this Africanism. It is among the most remarkable illustrations of the secret unity which connected the whole Christian world, that opinions first propagated on the shores of the Euxine found their most vigorous antagonist on the coast of Africa, while a new and fervid enthusiasm, which arose in Phrygia, captivated the kindred spirit of Tertullian.

Montanism. Montanism harmonized with African Christianity in the simplicity of its creed, which did not depart from the predominant form of Christianity; and in the extreme rigor of its fasts. While Gnosticism outbid the religion of Jesus and his apostles, Montanism outbid the Gnostics in its austerities;¹ it

¹ The Western churches were, as yet, generally averse to the excessive fasting subsequently introduced to so great an extent by the monastic spirit. See the curious vision of Attalus, the martyr of Lyons, in which a fellow-

admitted marriage as a necessary evil, but it denounced second nuptials as an inexpressible sin;¹ above all, Montanism concurred with the belief of the South in resolving religion into inward emotion. There is a singular correspondence between Phrygian Heathenism and the Phrygian Christianity of Montanus and his followers. The Orgiasm, the inward rapture, the working of a divine influence upon the soul till it was wrought up to a state of holy frenzy, had continually sent forth the priests of Cybele, and females of a highly excitable temperament, into the Western provinces;² whom the vulgar beheld with awe, as manifestly possessed by the divinity; whom the philosophic party, equally mistaken, treated with contempt, as impostors. So, with the followers of Montanus (and women were his most ardent votaries), with Prisca and Maximilla, the apostles of his sect, the pure and meek and peaceful spirit of Christianity became a wild, a visionary, a frantic enthusiasm: it worked paroxysms of intense devotion; it made the soul partake of all the fever of physical excitement. As in all ages where the mild and rational faith of Christ has been

prisoner, Alcibiades, who had long lived on bread and water alone, was re-proved for not making free use of God's creatures, and thus giving offence to the Church. The churches of Lyons and Vienne, having been founded from Phrygia, were anxious to avoid the least imputation of Montanism. — Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* v. 3.

¹ The prophetesses abandoned their husbands, according to Apollonius *apud* Euseb. v. 18.

² The effect of national character and temperament on the opinions and form of religion did not escape the observation of the Christian writers. There is a curious passage on the Phrygian national character in Socrates, *H. E.* iv. 28: "The Phrygians are a chaste and temperate people; they seldom swear: the Scythians and Thracians are choleric; the Eastern nations more disposed to immorality; the Paphlagonians and Phrygians, to neither: they do not care for the theatre or the games; prostitution is unusual." Their suppressed passions seem to have broken out at all periods in religious emotions.

too calm and serene for persons brooding to madness over their own internal emotions, it proclaimed itself a religious advancement, a more sublime and spiritual Christianity. Judaism was the infancy, Christianity the youth, the revelation of the Spirit the manhood, of the human soul. It was this Spirit, this Paraclete, which resided in all its fulness in the bosom of Montanus: his adversaries asserted that he gave himself out as the Paraclete; but it is more probable that his vague and mystic language was misunderstood, or possibly misrepresented by the malice of his adversaries. In Montanism, the sectarian, the exclusive spirit was at its height: and this claim to higher perfection, this seclusion from the vulgar race of Christians, whose weakness had been too often shown in the hour of trial; who had neither attained the height of his austerity, nor courted martyrdom, nor refused all ignominious compromises with the persecuting authorities with the unbending rigor which he demanded,—would still further commend the claims of Montanism to the homage of Tertullian.

During the persecution under Severus, Tertullian stood forth as the apologist of Christianity; and the tone of his Apology is characteristic not only of the man, but of his native country, while it is no less illustrative of the altered position of Christianity. The address of Tertullian to Scapula, the Prefect of Africa, is no longer in the tone of tranquil expostulation against the barbarity of persecuting blameless and unoffending men, still less that of humble supplication. Every sentence breathes scorn, defiance, menace. It heaps contempt upon the gods of Paganism; it avows the determination of the Christians to expel the *demons* from the respect

Apology of
Tertullian.

and adoration of mankind. It condescends not to exculpate the Christians from being the cause of the calamities which had recently laid waste the province, —the torrent rains which had swept away the harvests; the fires which had heaped with ruin the streets of Carthage; the sun which had been preternaturally eclipsed, when at its meridian, during an assembly of the province at Utica. All these portentous signs are unequivocally ascribed to the vengeance of the Christians' God, visiting the guilt of obstinate idolatry. The persecutors of the Christians are warned by the awful examples of Roman dignitaries who had been stricken blind, and eaten with worms, as the chastisement of Heaven for their injustice and cruelty to the worshippers of Christ. Scapula himself is sternly admonished to take warning by their fate; while the orator, by no means deficient, at the same time, in dexterous address, reminds him of the humane policy of others: "Your cruelty will be our glory. Thousands of both sexes, and of every rank, will eagerly crowd to martyrdom, exhaust your fires, and weary your swords. Carthage must be decimated; the principal persons in the city, even perhaps your own most intimate friends and kindred, must be sacrificed. Vainly will you war against God. Magistrates are but men, and will suffer the common lot of mortality; but Christianity will endure as long as the Roman empire, and the duration of the empire will be co-eval with that of the world."¹

History, even Christian history, is confined to more general views of public affairs, and dwells too exclusively on what may be called the high places of human

¹ I would recommend to my readers the fair and just contrast between Tertullian and Origen in Mons. Albert de Broglie's *L'Eglise et l'Empire*, pp. 121-126.

life; but, whenever a glimpse is afforded of lowlier and of more common life, it is perhaps best fulfilling its office of presenting a lively picture of the times, if it allows itself occasionally some more minute detail, and illustrates the manner in which the leading events of particular periods affected individuals not in the highest station.

Of all the histories of martyrdom, none is so unexaggerated in its tone and language, so entirely unencumbered with miracle; none abounds in such exquisite touches of nature, or, on the whole, from its minuteness and circumstantiality, breathes such an air of truth and reality,—as that of Perpetua and Felicitas, two African females. Their death is ascribed, in the Acts, to the year of the accession of Geta,¹ the son of Severus. Though there was no general persecution at that period, yet, as the Faithful held their lives, at all times, liable to the outburst of popular resentment, or the caprice of an arbitrary proconsul, there is much probability that a time of general rejoicing might be that in which the Christians, who were always accused of a disloyal reluctance to mingle in the popular festivities,

Martyrdom
of Perpetua
and Felicitas.

¹ The external evidence to the authenticity of these Acts is not quite equal to the internal. They were first published by Lucas Holstenius, from a MS. in the Convent of Monte Casino; re-edited by Valesius at Paris, and by Ruinart, in his *Acta Sincera Martyrum*, p. 90, who collated two other MSS. There appear, however, strong indications that the Acts of these African Martyrs are translated from the Greek; at least it is difficult otherwise to account for the frequent untranslated Greek words and idioms in the text. The following are examples: c. iii., *turbarum beneficio*, *χαρίν* c. iv., *bene venisti* *τεγνον*, *τεκνόν* c. viii., in oramate, a vision, *ὀράματα* diadema, or diastema an interval, *διαστήμα* c. x., *afe*, *ἀφή* xii., *agios*, *ἅγιος*.

There are indeed some suspicious marks of Montanism which perhaps prevented these Acts from being more generally known.

It is not quite clear where these martyrs suffered. Valesius supposed Carthage; others, in one of the two towns called Tuburbium, which were situated in Proconsular Africa.

and who kept aloof from the public sacrifices on such anniversaries, would be most exposed to persecution. The youthful catechumens, Revocatus and Felicitas, Saturninus and Secundulus, were apprehended, and with them Vivia Perpetua, a woman of good family, liberal education, and honorably married. Perpetua was about twenty-two years old; her father and mother were living; she had two brothers,—one of them, like herself, a catechumen,—and an infant at her breast. The history of the persecution is related by Perpetua herself, and is said to have been written by her own hand: “When we were in the hands of the persecutors, my father, in his tender affection, persevered in his endeavors to pervert me from the faith.¹ ‘My father, this vessel, be it a pitcher or any thing else, can we call it by any other name?’ ‘Certainly not,’ he replied. ‘Nor can I call myself by any other name but that of Christian.’ My father looked as if he could have plucked my eyes out; but he only harassed me, and departed, persuaded by the arguments of the Devil. Then, after being a few days without seeing my father, I was enabled to give thanks to God, and his absence was tempered to my spirit. After a few days, we were baptized; and the waters of baptism seemed to give power of endurance to my body. Again a few days, and we were cast into prison. I was terrified; for I had never before seen such total darkness. Oh, miserable day!—from the dreadful heat of the prisoners crowded together, and the insults of the soldiers. But I was wrung with solicitude for my infant. Two of our deacons, however, by the payment of money, obtained our removal

¹ *Dejicere*, “to cast me down,” is the expressive phrase, not uncommon among the early Christians.

for some hours in the day to a more open part of the prison. Each of the captives then pursued his usual occupation; but I sat and suckled my infant, who was wasting away with hunger. In my anxiety, I addressed and consoled my mother, and commended my child to my brother; and I began to pine away at seeing them pining away on my account. And for many days I suffered this anxiety, and accustomed my child to remain in the prison with me; and I immediately recovered my strength, and was relieved from my toil and trouble for my infant, and the prison became to me like a palace; and I was happier there than I should have been anywhere else.

“My brother then said to me, ‘Perpetua, you are exalted to such dignity, that you may pray for a vision, and it shall be shown you whether our doom is martyrdom or release.’” This is the language of Montanism; but the vision is exactly that which might haunt the slumbers of the Christian in a high state of religious enthusiasm: it showed merely the familiar images of the faith, arranging themselves into form. She saw a lofty ladder of gold, ascending to heaven; around it were swords, lances, hooks; and a great dragon lay at its foot, to seize those who would ascend. Saturus, a distinguished Christian, went up first, beckoned her to follow, and controlled the dragon by the name of Jesus Christ. She ascended, and found herself in a spacious garden, in which sat a man with white hair, in the garb of a shepherd, milking his sheep,¹ with many myriads around him. He welcomed her, and gave her a morsel of cheese; and “I received it with

¹ Bishop Münter, in his *Sinnbilder der alten Christen*, refers to this passage, to illustrate one of the oldest bass-reliefs of Christian art. — II. i. p. 62.

folded hands, and ate it; and all the saints around exclaimed, ‘Amen.’ I awoke at the sound, with the sweet taste in my mouth, and I related it to my brother; and we knew that our martyrdom was at hand, and we began to have no hope in this world.”

“After a few days, there was a rumor that we were to be heard. And my father came from the city, wasted away with anxiety, to pervert me; and he said, ‘Have compassion, O my daughter! on my gray hairs; have compassion on thy father, if he is worthy of the name of father. If I have thus brought thee up to the flower of thine age; if I have preferred thee to all thy brothers,—do not expose me to this disgrace. Look on thy brother; look on thy mother and thy aunt; look on thy child, who cannot live without thee. Do not destroy us all.’ Thus spake my father, kissing my hands in his fondness, and throwing himself at my feet; and in his tears he called me not his daughter, but his mistress (*domina*). And I was grieved for the gray hairs of my father, because he alone, of all our family, did not rejoice in my martyrdom; and I consoled him, saying, ‘In this trial, what God wills, will take place. Know that we are not in our own power, but in that of God.’ And he went away sorrowing.

“Another day, while we were at dinner, we were suddenly seized, and carried off to trial; and we came to the town. The report spread rapidly, and an immense multitude was assembled. We were placed at the bar; the rest were interrogated, and made their confession. And it came to my turn; and my father instantly appeared with my child, and he drew me down the step, and said in a beseeching tone, ‘Have com-

passion on your infant;' and Hilarianus the procurator, who exercised the power of life and death for the proconsul Timinianus, who had died, said, 'Spare the gray hairs of your parent; spare your infant; offer sacrifice for the welfare of the emperor.' And I answered, 'I will not sacrifice.' 'Art thou a Christian?' said Hilarianus. I answered, 'I am a Christian.' And, while my father stood there to persuade me, Hilarianus ordered him to be thrust down, and beaten with rods. And the misfortune of my father grieved me; and I was as much grieved for his old age as if I had been scourged myself. He then passed sentence on us all, and condemned us to the wild beasts; and we went back in cheerfulness to the prison. And because I was accustomed to suckle my infant, and to keep it with me in the prison, I sent Pomponius the deacon to seek it from my father. But my father would not send it; but, by the will of God, the child no longer desired the breast, and I suffered no uneasiness lest at such a time I should be afflicted by the sufferings of my child, or by pains in my breasts."

Her visions now grow more frequent and vivid. The name of her brother Dinocrates suddenly occurred to her in her prayers. He had died, at seven years old, of a loathsome disease, no doubt without Christian baptism. She had a vision in which Dinocrates appeared in a place of profound darkness, where there was a pool of water, which he could not reach on account of his small stature. In a second vision, Dinocrates appeared again; the pool rose up and touched him, and he drank a full goblet of the water. "And when he was satisfied, he went away to play, as infants are wont, and I awoke;

and I knew that he was translated from the place of punishment."¹

Again a few days, and the keeper of the prison profoundly impressed by their conduct, and beginning to discern "the power of God within them," admitted many of the brethren to visit them, for mutual consolation. "And, as the day of the games approached, my father entered, worn out with affliction, and began to pluck his beard, and to throw himself down with his face upon the ground, and to wish that he could hasten his death, and to speak words which might have moved any living creature. And I was grieved for the sorrows of his old age." The night before they were to be exposed in the arena, she dreamed that she was changed to a man; fought and triumphed over a huge and terrible Egyptian gladiator; and she put her foot upon his head, and she received the crown, and passed out of the Vivarian Gate, and knew that she had triumphed, not over man, but over the Devil. The vision of Saturus, which he related for their consolation, was more splendid. He ascended into the realms of light, into a beautiful garden, and to a palace, the walls of which were light; and there he was welcomed, not only by the angels, but by all the friends who had preceded him in the glorious career. It is singular, that, among the rest, he saw a bishop and a priest, between whom there had been some dissensions; and, while Perpetua was conversing with them, the angels interfered, and insisted on their perfect reconciliation. Some kind of blame seems to be attached to the bishop Optatus, because some of his flock appeared as if they came from the factions of the circus, with the spirit of mortal strife not yet allayed.

¹ This is evidently a kind of purgatory.

The narrative then proceeds to another instance of the triumph of faith over the strongest of human feelings,—the love of a young mother for her offspring. Felicitas was in the eighth month of her pregnancy. She feared, and her friends shared in her apprehension, that, on that account, her martyrdom might be delayed. They prayed together, and her travail came on. In her agony at that most painful period of delivery, she gave way to her sufferings. “How then,” said one of the servants of the prison, “if you cannot endure these pains, will you endure exposure to the wild beasts?” She replied, “I bear now my own sufferings: then, there will be One within me who will bear my sufferings for me, because I shall suffer for his sake.” She brought forth a girl, of whom a Christian sister took the charge.

Perpetua maintained her calmness to the end. While they were treated with severity by a tribune, who feared lest they should be delivered from the prison by enchantment, Perpetua remonstrated with a kind of mournful pleasantry, and said that, if ill used, they would do no credit to the birthday of Cæsar: the victims ought to be fattened for the sacrifice. But their language and demeanor were not always so calm and gentle; the words of some became those of defiance,—almost of insult; and this is related with as much admiration as the more tranquil sublimity of the former incidents. To the people who gazed on them, in their importunate curiosity, at their agapè, they said, “Is not to-morrow’s spectacle enough to satiate your hate? To-day you look on us with friendly faces: to-morrow you will be our deadly enemies. Mark well our countenances, that you may know them again on the day of judgment.” And to Hilarianus,

on his tribunal, they said, "Thou judgest us, but God will judge thee." At this language, the exasperated people demanded that they should be scourged. When taken out to the execution, they declined, and were permitted to decline, the profane dress in which they were to be clad,—the men, that of the priests of Saturn; the women, that of the priestesses of Ceres.¹ They came forward in their simple attire, Perpetua singing psalms. The men were exposed to leopards and bears; and the women were hung up naked in nets, to be gored by a furious cow. But even the excited populace shrank with horror at the spectacle of two young and delicate women, one recently recovered from childbirth, in this state. They were recalled by acclamation, and in mercy brought forward again, clad in loose robes.² Perpetua was tossed, her garment was rent; but, more conscious of her wounded modesty than of pain, she drew the robe over the part of her person which was exposed. She then calmly clasped up her hair, because it did not become a martyr to suffer with dishevelled locks, the sign of sorrow. She then raised up the fainting and mortally wounded Felicitas; and, the cruelty of the populace being for a time appeased, they were permitted to retire. Perpetua seemed rapt in ecstasy, and, as if awaking from sleep, inquired when she was to be exposed to the beast. She could scarcely be made to believe what had taken place; her last words tenderly admonished her brother to be steadfast in the faith. I may close the scene by intimating that all were speedily released from their sufferings, and

¹ This was an unusual circumstance, and ascribed to the Devil.

² I am not sure that I am correct in this part of the version: it appears to me to be the sense. "*Ita revocatæ discinguntur*" is paraphrased by Lucas Holstenius "*revocatæ et discinctis indutæ.*"

entered into their glory. Perpetua guided with her own hand the merciful sword of the gladiator which relieved her from her agony.

This African persecution, which laid the seeds of future schisms and fatal feuds, lasted till at least the second year of Caracalla. From its close, except

Caracalla.
Geta.
A.D. 211-217.

during the short reign of Maximin, Christianity enjoyed uninterrupted peace till the reign of Decius.¹ But during this period

occurred a remarkable event in the religious history of Rome. The pontiff of one of the wild forms of the Nature-worship of the East appeared in the city of Rome as emperor. The ancient rites of Baalpeor, but little changed in the course of ages, intruded themselves into the sanctuary of the Capitoline Jove, and offended at once the religious majesty and the graver decency of Roman manners.² Elagabalus de-

Elagabalus
emperor.
A.D. 218.

rived his name from the Syrian appellative of the Sun; he had been educated in the precincts of the temple; and the Emperor of Rome was lost and absorbed in the priest of an effeminate superstition. The new religion did not steal in under the modest demeanor of a stranger, claiming the common rights of hospitality as the national faith of a subject people: it entered with a public pomp, as though to supersede and eclipse the ancestral deities of Rome. The god Elagabalus was conveyed in solemn procession through the wondering provinces; his symbols were received with all the honor of the Supreme Deity. The conical black stone, which was adored at Emesa, was, no doubt, in its origin, one of

¹ From 212 to 249, — Caracalla, 211; Macrinus, 217; Elagabalus, 218; Alexander Severus, 222; Maximin and the Gordians, 235-244; Philip, 244; Decius, 249.

² Lampridii Heliogabalus. Dion Cassius, lib. lxxix.; Herodian, v.

those obscene symbols which appear in almost every form of the Oriental Nature-worship. The rudeness of ancient art had allowed it to remain in less offensive shapelessness; and, not improbably, the original symbolic meaning had become obsolete. The Sun had become the visible type of Deity, and the object of adoration. The mysterious principle of generation, of which, in the primitive religion of nature, he was the type and image, gave place to the noblest object of human idolatry,—the least debasing representative of the Great Supreme. The idol of Emesa entered Rome in solemn procession; a magnificent temple was built upon the Palatine Hill; a number of altars stood round, on which every day the most sumptuous offerings—hecatombs of oxen, countless sheep, the most costly aromatics, the choicest wines—were offered. Streams of blood and wine were constantly flowing down; while the highest dignitaries of the empire—commanders of legions, rulers of provinces, the gravest senators,—appeared as humble ministers, clad in the loose and flowing robes and linen sandals of the East, among the lascivious dances and the wanton music of Oriental drums and cymbals. These degrading practices were the only way to civil and military preferment. The whole senate and equestrian order stood around; and those who played ill the part of adoration, or whose secret murmurs incautiously betrayed their devout indignation (for this insult to the ancient religion of Rome awakened some sense of shame in the degenerate and servile aristocracy), were put to death. The most sacred and patriotic sentiments cherished, above all the hallowed treasures of the city, the Palladium, the image of Minerva. Popular veneration worshipped, in dis-

tant awe, the unseen deity; for profane eye might never behold the virgin image. The inviolability of the Roman dominion was inseparably connected with the uncontaminated sanctity of the Palladium. The Syrian declared his intention of wedding the ancient tutelary goddess to his foreign deity. The image was publicly brought forth; exposed to the sullyng gaze of the multitude; solemnly wedded, and insolently repudiated by the unworthy stranger. A more appropriate bride was found in the kindred Syrian deity, worshipped under the name of Astarte in the East, in Carthage as the Queen of Heaven,—Venus Urania, as translated into the mythological language of the West. She was brought from Carthage. The whole city—the whole of Italy—was commanded to celebrate the bridal festival; and the nuptials of the two foreign deities might appear to complete the triumph over the insulted divinities of Rome.

Worship of
the Sun in
Rome.

Nothing was sacred to the voluptuous Syrian. He introduced the manners as well as the religion of the East; his rapid succession of wives imitated the polygamy of an Oriental despot; and his vices not merely corrupted the morals, but insulted the most sacred feelings of the people. He tore a vestal virgin from her sanctuary, to suffer his polluting embraces; he violated the sanctuary itself; attempted to make himself master of the mystic coffer in which the sacred deposit was enshrined: it was said that the pious fraud of the priesthood deceived him with a counterfeit, which he dashed to pieces in his anger. It was openly asserted, that the worship of the Sun, under his name of Elagabalus, was to supersede all other worship. If we may believe the biographies in the

Augustan history, a more ambitious scheme of a universal religion had dawned upon the mind of the emperor. The Jewish, the Samaritan, even the Christian, were to be fused and recast into one great system, of which the Sun was to be the central object of adoration.¹ At all events, the deities of Rome were actually degraded before the public gaze into humble ministers of Elagabalus. Every year of the emperor's brief reign, the god was conveyed from his Palatine temple to a suburban edifice of still more sumptuous magnificence. The statue passed in a car drawn by six horses. The emperor of the world, his eyes stained with paint, ran and danced before it with antic gestures of adoration. The earth was strewn with gold dust; flowers and chaplets were scattered by the people; while the images of all the other gods, the splendid ornaments and vessels of all their temples, were carried, like the spoils of subject nations, in the annual ovation of the Phœnician deity. Even human sacrifices, and, if we may credit the monstrous fact, the most beautiful sons of the noblest families, were offered on the altar of this Moloch of the East.²

Religious
innovations
meditated
by Elagabalus.

It is impossible to suppose that the weak and crumbling edifice of Paganism was not shaken to its base by this extraordinary revolution. An ancient religion cannot thus be insulted without losing much of its majesty: its hold upon the popular veneration is violently torn asunder. With its more sincere

¹ "Id agens ne quis Romæ Deus nisi Heliogabalus coleretur. Dicebat præterea, Judæorum et Samaritanorum religiones, et Christianam devotionem, illuc transferendam, ut omnium culturarum secretum Heliogabali sacerdotium teneret." — p. 461.

² "Cædit et humanas hostias, lectis ad hoc pueris nobilibus et decoris per omnem Italiam patrimis et matrimis, credo ut major esset utrique parenti dolor." — Lamprid. Heliogabalus.

votaries, the general animosity to foreign, particularly to Eastern, religions, might be inflamed or deepened; and Christianity might share in some part of the detestation excited by the excesses of a superstition so opposite in its nature. But others whose faith had been shaken, and whose moral feelings revolted, by a religion whose essential character was sensuality, and whose licentious tendency had been so disgustingly illustrated by the unspeakable pollutions of its imperial patron, would hasten to embrace that purer faith which was most remote from the religion of Elagabalus.

From the policy of the court, as well as the pure and amiable character of the successor of Elagabalus, the more offensive parts of this foreign superstition disappeared with their imperial patron. But the old Roman religion was not re-instated in its jealous and unmingled dignity. Alexander Severus had been bred in another school; and the influence which swayed him, during the earlier part at least of his reign, was of a different character from that which had formed the mind of Elagabalus. It was the mother of Elagabalus who, however she might blush with shame at the impurities of her effeminate son, had consecrated him to the service of the deity in Emesa. The mother of Alexander Severus, the able, perhaps crafty and rapacious, Mammæa, had at least held intercourse with the Christians of Syria. She had conversed with the celebrated Origen, and listened to his exhortations, if without conversion, still not without respect. Alexander, though he had neither the religious education, the pontifical character, nor the dissolute manners of his predecessor, was a Syrian,

Alexander
Severus
emperor.
A.D. 222.

Mammæa.

with no hereditary attachment to the Roman form of Paganism. He seems to have affected a kind of universalism: he paid decent respect to the gods of the Capitol; he held in honor the Egyptian worship, and enlarged the temples of Isis and Serapis. In his own palace, with respectful indifference, he enshrined, as it were, as his household deities, the representatives of the different religious or theophilosophic systems which were prevalent in the Roman empire, — Orpheus, Abraham, Christ, and Apollonius of Tyana. The first of these represented the wisdom of the Mysteries, the purified Nature-worship, which had labored to elevate the popular mythology into a noble and coherent allegorism. It is singular, that Abraham, rather than Moses, was placed at the head of Judaism: it is possible that the traditionary sanctity which attached to the first parent of the Jewish people, and of many of the Arab tribes, and which was afterwards embodied in the Mohammedan Koran, was floating, in the East, and would comprehend, as it were, the opinions not only of the Jews, but of a much wider circle of the Syrian natives.¹ In Apollonius was centred the more modern Theurgy, — the magic which commanded the intermediate spirits between the higher world and the world of man; the more spiritual polytheism which had released the subordinate deities from their human form, and maintained them in constant intercourse with the soul of man. Christianity, in the person of its Founder, even where it did not command authority as a religion, had nevertheless lost the character, under which it had so

¹ This might seem to confirm the theory of Sprenger as to the widespread Abrahamic religion, Monotheism, called Hanyferey, prevalent in Arabia at the time of the coming of Mohammed. — *Leben des Mohammed*, B. i. c. i.

long and so unjustly labored, of animosity to mankind. Though He was considered but as one of the sages who shared in the homage paid to their beneficent wisdom, the followers of Jesus had now lived down all the bitter hostility which had so generally prevailed against them. The homage of Alexander Severus may be a fair test of the general sentiment of the more intelligent Heathen of his time.¹ It is clear that the exclusive spirit of Greek and Roman civilization is broken down; it is not now Socrates or Plato, Epicurus or Zeno, who are considered the sole guiding intellects of human wisdom. These Eastern *barbarians* are considered rivals, if not superior, to the philosophers of Greece. The world is betraying its irresistible yearning towards a *religion*; and these are the first overtures, as it were, to more general submission.

In the reign of Alexander Severus, at least, commenced the great change in the outward appearance of Christianity. Christian bishops were admitted, even at the court, in a recognized official character; and Christian churches began to rise in different parts of the empire, and to possess endowments in land.² To the astonishment of the Heathen, the religion of Christ had as yet appeared without temple or altar; the religious assemblies had been held in privacy: it was yet a

Change in
the relation
of Chris-
tianity to
society.

¹ Jablonski wrote a very ingenious essay to show that Alexander Severus was converted to *Gnostic* Christianity. — *Opuscula*, vol. iv. Compare Heyne, *Opuscula*, vi. p. 169, *et seqq.*

² Tillemont, as Gibbon observes, assigns the date of the earliest Christian churches to the reign of Alexander Severus; Mr. Moyle, to that of Gallienus. The difference is very slight; and, after all, the change from a private building, set apart for a particular use, and a public one of no architectural pretensions, may have been almost imperceptible. The passage of Lamprius appears conclusive in favor of Tillemont.

domestic worship. Even the Jew had his public synagogue or his more secluded proseucha; but where the Christians met was indicated by no separate and distinguished dwelling: the cemetery of their dead, the sequestered grove, the private chamber, contained their peaceful assemblies. Their privacy was at once their security and their danger. On the one hand, there was no well-known edifice in which the furious and excited rabble could surprise the general body of the Christians, and wreak its vengeance by indiscriminate massacre; on the other, the jealousy of the Government against all private associations would be constantly kept on the alert; and a religion without a temple was so inexplicable a problem to Pagan feeling, that it would strengthen and confirm all the vague imputations of atheism, or of criminal license in these mysterious meetings which seemed to shun the light of day. Their religious usages must now have become much better known, as Alexander borrowed their mode of publishing the names of those who were proposed for ordination, and established a similar proceeding with regard to all candidates for civil office; and a piece of ground in Rome, which was litigated by a company of victualers, was awarded by the emperor himself to the Christians, upon the principle that it was better that it should be devoted to the worship of God in any form, than applied to a profane and unworthy use.¹

First
Christian
churches.

These buildings were no doubt, as yet, of modest height and unpretending form; but the religion was thus publicly recognized as one of the various forms of worship which the Government did not prohibit from opening the gates of its temples to mankind.

¹ *Ælii Lamprii Alexander Severus.*

The progress of Christianity during all this period, though silent, was uninterrupted. The miseries which were gradually involving the whole Roman empire from the conflicts and the tyranny of a rapid succession of masters, from taxation becoming more grinding and burdensome, and from the still-multiplying inroads and expanding devastations of the barbarians, assisted its progress. Many took refuge in a religion which promised beatitude in a future state of being, from the inevitable evils of this life.

But in no respect is the progress of Christianity more evident and remarkable than in its influence on Heathenism itself. Though philosophy, which had

Influence of
Christianity
on Heathen-
ism.

long been the antagonist and most dangerous enemy of the popular religion, now made apparently common cause with it against the common enemy, Christianity, yet there had been an unperceived and amicable approximation between the two religions. Heathenism, as interpreted by philosophy, almost found favor with some of the more moderate Christian apologists; while, as we have seen, in the altered tone of the controversy, the Christians have rarely occasion to defend themselves against those horrible charges of licentiousness, incest, and cannibalism, which, till recently, their advocates had been constrained to notice. The Christians endeavored to enlist the earlier philosophers in their cause; they were scarcely content with asserting that the nobler Grecian philosophy might be designed to prepare the human mind for the reception of Christianity; they were almost inclined to endow these sages with a kind of prophetic foreknowledge of its more mysterious doctrines. "I have explained," says the Christian in Minucius Felix, "the opinions of almost all the

philosophers, whose most illustrious glory it is that they have worshipped one God, though under various names; so that one might suppose, either that the Christians of the present day are philosophers, or that the philosophers of old were already Christians.”¹

But these advances on the part of Christianity were more than met by Paganism. The Heathen religion, which prevailed at least among the more enlightened Pagans during this period, and which, differently modified, more fully developed, and, as we shall hereafter find, exalted still more from a philosophy into a religion, Julian endeavored to re-instate as the established faith, was almost as different Change in
Heathenism. from that of the older Greeks and Romans, or even that which prevailed at the commencement of the empire, as it was from Christianity. It worshipped in the same temples; it performed, to a certain extent, the same rites; it actually abrogated the local worship of no one of the multitudinous deities of Paganism. But over all this, which was the real religion, both in theory and practice, in the older times, had risen a kind of speculative Theism, to which the popular worship acknowledged its humble subordination. On the great elementary principle of Christianity, the Unity of the Supreme God, this approximation had long been silently made. Celsus, in his celebrated controversy with Origen, asserts that this philosophical notion of the Deity is perfectly reconcilable with Paganism. “We also can place a Supreme Being above the world and above all human things, and approve and sym

¹ According to Justin Martyr (Apolog. 5), Socrates was instructed through the Word, the Word which afterwards took the form of man, and was called Jesus Christ. (Compare Clem. Alex., *Isagoge ad Hypotup.*, apud Bunsen *Analecta*, i. 169.) I am here again considerably indebted to Tschirner, *Fall des Heidenthums*, pp. 334-401.

pathize in whatever may be taught of a spiritual rather than material adoration of the gods; for with the belief in the gods worshipped in every land and by every people harmonizes the belief in a Primal Being, a Supreme God, who has given to every land its guardian, to every people its presiding deity. The unity of the Supreme Being, and the consequent unity of the design of the universe, remains, even if it be admitted that each people has its gods, whom it must worship in a peculiar manner, according to their peculiar character; and the worship of all these different deities is reflected back to the Supreme God, who has appointed them, as it were, his delegates and representatives. Those who argue that men ought not to serve many masters impute human weakness to God. God is not jealous of the adoration paid to subordinate deities: He is superior in his nature to degradation and insult. Reason itself might justify the belief in the inferior deities, which are the objects of the established worship. For, since the Supreme God can only produce that which is immortal and imperishable, the existence of mortal beings cannot be explained, unless we distinguish from Him those inferior deities, and assert them to be the creatures of mortal beings and of perishable things.”¹

From this time, Paganism has changed not merely some of its fundamental tenets, but its general character: it has become serious, solemn, devout. In Lucian, unbelief seemed to have reached its height, and as rapidly declined. The witty satirist of Polytheism had, no doubt, many admirers: he had no imitators. A re-action has taken place; none of the distinguished statesmen of the third century boldly and

Paganism
becomes
serious.

¹ Origen contra Celsum, lib. vii.

ostentatiously, as in the times of the later republic, display their contempt for religion. Epicureanism has lost, if not its partisans, its open advocates. The most eminent writers treat religion with decency, if not with devout respect: no one is ambitious of passing for a despiser of the gods. And with faith and piety broke forth all the aberrations of religious belief and devout feeling, wonder-working mysticism, and dreamy enthusiasm, in their various forms.¹

This was the commencement of that new Platonism which, from this time, exercised a supreme authority, to the extinction of the older forms of Grecian philosophy, and grew up into a dangerous antagonist of Christianity. It aspired to be a religion as well as a philosophy, and gradually incorporated more and more of such religious elements from the creeds of the Oriental philosophers as would harmonize with its system. It was extravagant, but it was earnest; wild, but serious. It created a kind of literature of its own. The Life of Apollonius of Tyana was ^{Apollonius of Tyana.} a grave romance, in which it embodied much of its Theurgy, its power of connecting the invisible with the visible world; its wonder-working, through the intermediate demons at its command, which bears possibly, but not clearly, an intentional, certainly a close, resemblance to the Gospels. It seized and moulded to its purpose the poetry and philosophy of older Greece. Such of the mythic legends as it could allegorize, it retained with every demonstration of reverence; the rest it either allowed quietly to fall into oblivion, or repudiated as lawless fictions of the poets. The manner in which poetry was trans- ^{Porphyrius.} mured into moral and religious allegory is

shown in the treatise of Porphyrius on the Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey. The skill, as well as the dreamy mysticism, with which this school of writers combined the dim traditions of the older philosophy and the esoteric doctrines of the Mysteries, to give the sanction of antiquity to their own vague but attractive and fanciful theories, appears in the Life of Pythagoras, and in the work on the Mysteries by a somewhat later writer, Iamblichus.

After all, however, this philosophic Paganism could exercise no very extensive influence. Its votaries were probably far inferior in number to those of any one of the foreign religions introduced into the Greek and Roman part of the empire; and its strength perhaps consisted in the facility with which it coalesced with any one of those religions, or blended them up together in one somewhat discordant syncretism. The same man was philosopher, hierophant at Samothrace or Eleusis, and initiate in the rites of Cybele, of Serapis, or of Mithra. Of itself this scheme was far too abstract and metaphysical to extend beyond the schools of Alexandria or of Athens. Though it prevailed afterwards in influencing the Heathen fanaticism of Julian, it eventually retarded but little the extinction of Heathenism. It was merely a sort of refuge for the intellectual few,—a self-complacent excuse, which enabled them to assert, as they supposed, their own mental superiority, while they were endeavoring to maintain or to revive the vulgar superstition, which they themselves could not but in secret condemn. The more refined it became, the less was it suited for common use, and the less it harmonized with the ordinary Paganism. Thus that which, in one respect, elevated it into a dangerous rival of Christianity, at

the same time deprived it of its power. It had borrowed much from Christianity, or, at least, had been tacitly modified by its influence; but it was the speculative rather than the practical part, that which constituted its sublimity rather than its popularity, in which it approximated to the Gospel. We shall encounter this new Paganism again before long, in its more perfect and developed form.

The peace which Christianity enjoyed under the virtuous Severus was disturbed by the violent accession of a Thracian savage.¹ It was Maximin.
A.D. 235. enough to have shared in the favor of Alexander to incur the brutal resentment of Maximin. The Christian bishops, like all the other polite and virtuous courtiers of his peaceful predecessor, were exposed to the suspicions and the hatred of the rude and warlike Maximin. Christianity, however, suffered, though in a severer degree, the common lot of mankind.

The short reign of Gordian was uneventful in Christian history. The emperors, it has been Gordian.
A.D. 238-244. justly observed, who were born in the Asiatic provinces were, in general, the least unfriendly to Christianity. Their religion, whatever it might be, was less uncongenial to some of the forms of the new faith; it was a kind of eclecticism of different Eastern religions, which, in general, was least inclined to intolerance: at any rate, it was uninfluenced by national pride, which was now become the main support of Roman Paganism. Philip, the Arabian,² is Philip.
A.D. 244. claimed by some of the earliest Christian writers as a convert to the Gospel. But the extraordinary splendor with which he celebrated the great religious rites of Rome refutes at once this statement.

¹ Euseb., Hist. Ecc. vi. 28.

² Euseb. vi. 34.

Yet it might be fortunate, that a sovereign of his mild sentiments towards the new faith filled the ^{Secular games.} throne at a period when the secular games, A.D. 247. which commemorated the thousandth year of Rome, were celebrated with unexampled magnificence. The majesty, the eternity, of the empire were intimately connected with the due performance of these solemnities. To their intermission, after the reign of Diocletian, the Pagan historian ascribes the decline of Roman greatness.¹ The second millennium of Rome commenced with no flattering signs; the times were gloomy and menacing; and the general and rigid absence of the Christians from these sacred national ceremonies, under a sterner or more bigoted emperor, would scarcely have escaped the severest animadversions of the Government. Even under the present circumstances, the danger of popular tumult would be with difficulty avoided or restrained. Did patriotism and national pride incline the Roman Christians to make some sacrifice of their severer principles,—to compromise for a time their rigid aversion to idolatry, which was thus connected with the peace and prosperity of the state?

The persecution under Decius, both in extent and violence, is the most uncontested of those ^{Decius.} which the ecclesiastical historians took pains A.D. 249–251. to raise to the mystic number of the ten plagues of Egypt. It was almost the first measure of a reign which commenced in successful rebellion, and ended, after two years, in fatal defeat. The Goths delivered the Christians from their most formidable oppressor; yet the Goths may have been the innocent authors of their calamities. The passions and the policy of the

¹ Zosimus, ii. 7.

emperor were concurrent motives for his hostility. The Christians were now a recognized body in the state: however carefully they might avoid mingling in the political factions of the empire, they were necessarily of the party of the emperor whose favor they had enjoyed. His enemies became their enemies. Maximin persecuted those who had appeared at the court of Alexander Severus; Decius hated the adherents, as he supposed the partisans, of the murdered Philip.¹ The Gothic war shook to the centre the edifice of Roman greatness. Roman Paganism discovered in the relaxed morals of the people one of the causes of the decline of the empire; it demanded the revival of the censorship. This indiscriminating feeling would mistake, in the blindness of aversion and jealousy, the great silent corrective of the popular morality for one of the principal causes of depravation. The partial protection of a foreign religion by a foreign emperor (now that Christianity had begun to erect temple against temple, altar against altar, and the Christian bishop met the pontiff on equal terms around the imperial throne) would be considered among the most flagrant departures from the sound wisdom of ancient Rome. The descendant of the Decii, however his obscure Pannonian birth might cast a doubt on his hereditary dignity, was called upon to restore the religion as well as the manners of Rome to their ancient austere purity; to vindicate their insulted supremacy from the rivalry of an Asiatic and modern superstition. The persecution of Decius endeavored to purify Rome itself from the presence of these degenerate enemies to her prosperity. The bishop Fabianus was

Causes of the
Decian persecution.

Fabianus.
Bishop of
Rome.

¹ Euseb. vi. 39.

one of the first victims of his resentment;¹ and the Christians did not venture to raise a successor to the obnoxious office during the brief reign of Decius.

The example of the capital was followed in many of the great cities of the empire. In the turbulent and sanguinary Alexandria, the zeal of the populace outran that of the emperor, and had already commenced a violent local persecution.² Antioch lamented the loss of her bishop, Babylas, whose relics were afterwards worshipped in what was still the voluptuous grove of Daphne.³ Origen was exposed to cruel torments, but escaped with his life. But Christian

Enthusi-
asm of
Chris-
tianity less
strong.

enthusiasm, by being disseminated over a wider sphere, had naturally lost some of its first vigor. With many, it was now a hereditary faith, not embraced by the ardent conviction of the individual, but instilled into the mind, with more or less depth, by Christian education. The Christian writers now begin to deplore the failure of genuine Christian principles, and to trace the divine wrath in the affliction of the churches. Instead of presenting, as it were, a narrow but firm and unbroken front to the enemy, a much more numerous but less united and less uniformly resolute force now marched under the banner of Christianity. Instead of the serene fortitude with which they formerly appeared before the tribunal of the magistrate, many now stood pale, trembling, and reluctant; neither ready to submit to the idolatrous ceremony of sacrifice, nor pre-

¹ The Cav. de Rossi has found the name of Fabianus (I have read it myself), the first authentic martyr Pope in the real cemetery of Callistus, which his sagacity discovered, and his labors have explored. More on the Catacombs hereafter.

² Euseb. vi. 40, 41.

³ Read the Sermons of Chrysostom on S. Babylas.

pared to resist even unto death. The fiery zeal of the African churches appears to have been most subject to these paroxysms of weakness;¹ it was there that the fallen (the *Lapsi*) formed a distinct and too numerous class, whose re-admission into the privileges of the Faithful became a subject of fierce controversy;² and the *Libellatici*, who had purchased a billet of immunity from the rapacious Government, formed another party, and were held in no less disrepute by those who, in the older spirit of the faith, had been ready or eager to obtain the crown of martyrdom.

Carthage was disgraced by the criminal weakness even of some among her clergy. A council was held to decide this difficult point; and the decisions of the council were tempered by moderation and humanity. None were irrevocably and for ever excluded from the pale of salvation; but they were absolved, according to the degree of criminality which might attach to their apostasy. Those who had sacrificed — the most awful and scarcely expiable offence! — required long years of penitence and humility; those who had only weakly compromised their faith, by obtaining or purchasing billets of exemption from persecution, were admitted to shorter and easier terms of reconciliation.³

¹ Dionysius apud Eusebium, vi. 14.

² The severer opinion was called the heresy of Novatian; charity and orthodoxy, on this occasion, concurred. — Euseb. vi. sub fin., vii. 4, 5. Another controversy arose on the rebaptizing heretics, in which Cyprian took the lead of the severer party. — Euseb. vii. 3.

³ The horror with which those who had sacrificed were beheld by the more rigorous of their brethren may be conceived from the energetic language of Cyprian: "Nonne quando ad Capitolium sponte ventum est, quando ultro ad obsequium diri facinoris accessum est, labavit gressus, caligavit aspectus, tremuerunt viscera, brachia conciderunt? Nonne sensus obstupuit, lingua hæsit, sermo defecit? . . . Nonne ara illa, quo moriturus accessit, rogos illi fuit? Nonne diaboli altare quod fœtore tætro fumare et redolere cospex-

Valerian, who ascended the throne three years after the death of Decius, had been chosen by Decius to revive, in his person, the ancient and honorable office of Censor; and the general admiration of his virtues

Valerian. had ratified the appointment of the emperor.
A.D. 254.

It was no discredit to Christianity, that the commencement of the censor's reign, who may be supposed to have examined with more than ordinary care its influence on the public morals, was favorable to their cause. Their security was restored, and, for a short time, persecution ceased. The change which took place in the sentiments and conduct of Valerian is attributed to the influence of a man deeply versed in magical arts.¹ The censor was enslaved by a superstition which the older Romans would have beheld with little less abhorrence than Christianity itself. It must be admitted, that Christian superstition was too much inclined to encroach upon the province of Oriental magic; and the more the older Polytheism decayed, the more closely it allied itself with this powerful agent in commanding the fears of man. With all classes, from the emperor who employed

erat, velut funus et bustum vitæ suæ horrere, ac fugere debebat. . . . Ipse ad aram hostia, victima ipse venisti. Immolâsti illic salutem tuam, spem tuam, fidem tuam funestis illis ignibus concremâsti." — Cyprian, *De Lapsis*. Some died of remorse; with some the guilty food acted as poison. But the following was the most extraordinary occurrence, of which Cyprian declares himself to have been an eye-witness. An infant had been abandoned by its parents in their flight. The nurse carried it to the magistrate. Being too young to eat meat, bread, steeped in wine offered in sacrifice, was forced into its mouth. Immediately that it returned to the Christians, the child, which could not speak, communicated the sense of its guilt by cries and convulsive agitations. It refused the sacrament (then administered to infants), closed its lips, and averted its face. The deacon forced it into its mouth. The consecrated wine would not remain in the contaminated body, but was cast up again. — In what a high-wrought state of enthusiasm must men have been who would relate and believe such statements as miraculous?

¹ Euseb. vii. 10.

their mystic arts to inquire into the secrets of futurity, to the peasant who shuddered at their power, the adepts in those dark and forbidden sciences were probably more influential opponents of Christianity than the ancient and established priesthood.

Macrianus is reported to have obtained such complete mastery over the mind of Valerian as to induce him to engage in the most guilty mysteries of magic to trace the fate of the empire in the entrails of human victims. The edict against the Christians, suggested by the animosity of Macri-
A.D. 257.
 anus, allowed the community to remain in undisturbed impunity; but it subjected to the penalty of death all the bishops who refused to conform, and confiscated all the endowments of their churches into the public treasury.

The dignity of one of its victims conferred a melancholy celebrity on the persecution of Valerian. The most distinguished prelate at this time
Cyprian,
Bishop of
Carthage.
 in Western Christendom was Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. If not of honorable birth or descent,—for this appears doubtful,—his abilities had raised him to eminence and wealth. He taught rhetoric at Carthage, and, either by this honorable occupation or by some other means, had acquired an ample fortune. Cyprian was advanced in life when he embraced the doctrines of Christianity; but he entered on his new career, if with the mature reason of age, with the ardor and freshness of youth. His wealth was devoted to pious and charitable uses; his rhetorical studies, if they gave clearness and order to his language, by no means chilled its fervor or constrained its vehemence. He had the African temperament of character, and, if it may be so said, of style; the

warmth, the power of communicating its impassioned sentiments to the reader; perhaps not all the pregnant conciseness, nor all the energy, of Tertullian, but, at the same time, little of his rudeness and obscurity. Cyprian passed rapidly through the steps of Christian initiation, almost as rapidly through the first gradations of the clerical order. On the vacancy of the bishopric of Carthage, his reluctant diffidence was overpowered by the acclamations of the whole city, who environed his house, and compelled him by their friendly violence to assume the distinguished, and, it might be, dangerous office. He yielded, to preserve the peace of Carthage.¹

Cyprian entertained the loftiest notions of the episcopal authority. The severe and inviolable unity of the outward and visible Church appeared to him an integral part of Christianity; and the rigid discipline enforced by the episcopal order, the only means of maintaining that unity. The pale which enclosed the Church from the rest of mankind was drawn with the most relentless precision. The Church was the ark, and all without it were left to perish in the unsparing deluge.² The growth of heretical discord or disobedience was inexpiable, even by the blood of the transgressor. He might bear the flames with equanimity,—he might submit to be torn to pieces by wild beasts: there could be no martyr *without* the Church. Tortures and death bestowed not the crown of immortality: they were but the just retribution of treason to the faith.³

¹ Epist. xiv.

² "Si potuit evadere quisquam, qui extra arcam Noe fuit, et qui extra ecclesiam foris fuerit, evadit."—Cyprian, De Unitate Ecclesiæ.

³ "Esse martyr non potest, qui in ecclesia non est.

⁴ Ardeant licet flammis et ignibus traditi, vel objecti bestiis animas suas

The fearful times which arose during his episcopate tried these stern and lofty principles, as the questions which arose out of the Decian persecutions did his judgment and moderation. Cyprian, who embraced without hesitation the severer opinion with regard to the rebaptizing heretics, notwithstanding his awful horror of the guilt of apostasy, acquiesced in, if he did not dictate, the more temperate decisions of the Carthaginian synod concerning those whose weakness had betrayed them either into the public denial, or a timid dissimulation, of the faith.

The first rumor of persecution designated the Bishop of Carthage for its victim. "Cyprian to the lions!" was the loud and unanimous outcry of infuriated Paganism. Cyprian withdrew from the storm, not, as his subsequent courageous behavior showed, from timidity; but neither approving that useless and sometimes ostentatious prodigality of life, which betrayed more pride than humble acquiescence in the divine will; possibly from the truly charitable reluctance to tempt his enemies to an irretrievable crime. He withdrew to some quiet and secure retreat, from which he wrote animating and consolatory letters to those who had not been so prudent or so fortunate as to escape the persecution. His letters describe the relentless barbarity with which the Christians were treated; they are an authentic and contemporary statement of the sufferings which the Christians endured in defence of their faith. If highly colored

ponant, non erit illa fidei corona, sed pœna perfidiæ, nec religiosæ virtutis exitus gloriosus, sed desperationis interitus." — *De Unit. Eccles.*

"*Et tamen neque hoc baptisma (sanguinis) heretico prodest, quamvis Christum confessus, et extra ecclesiam fuerit occisus.*" — *Epist. lxxiii.*

"Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." — 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Is there no difference between the spirit of St. Paul and of Cyprian?

by the generous and tender sympathies or by the ardent eloquence of Cyprian, they have nothing of legendary extravagance. The utmost art was exercised to render bodily suffering more acute and intense: it was a continued strife between the obstinacy and inventive cruelty of the tormentor, and the patience of the victim.¹ During the reign of Decius, which appears to have been one continued persecution, Cyprian stood aloof in his undisturbed retreat. He returned to Carthage probably at the commencement of Valerian's reign, and had a splendid opportunity of Christian revenge upon the city which had thirsted for his blood. A plague ravaged the whole Roman world, and its most destructive violence thinned the streets of Carthage. It went spreading on from house to house, especially those of the lower orders, with awful regularity. The streets were strewn with the bodies of the dead and the dying who vainly appealed to the laws of nature and humanity for that assistance of which those who passed them by might soon stand in need. General distrust spread through society. Men avoided or exposed their nearest relatives; as if, by excluding the dying, they could exclude death.² No one, says the deacon Pontius, writing of the population of Carthage in general, did as he would be done by. Cyprian addressed the Chris-

¹ "Tolerâstis usque ad consummationem gloriæ durissimam questionem, nec cessistis suppliciis, sed vobis potius supplicia cesserunt.

"Steterunt tuti torquentibus fortiores, et pulsantes et laniantes ungulas pulsata ac laniata membra vicerunt. Inexpugnabilem fidem superare non potuit sæviens diu plaga repetita quamvis ruptâ compage viscerum; torquentur in servis Dei jam non membra, sed vulnera."—Cyprian, Epist. viii. ad Martyres. Compare Epist. lxii.

² Pontius, in Vitâ Cypriani. "Horrere omnes, fugere, vitare contagium: exponere suos impie; quasi cum illo peste morituro, etiam mortem ipsam aliquis posset excludere."

tians in the most earnest and effective language. He exhorted them to show the sincerity of their belief in the doctrines of their Master, not by confining their acts of kindness to their own brotherhood, but by extending them indiscriminately to their enemies. The city was divided into districts; offices were assigned to all the Christians; the rich lavished their wealth, the poor their personal exertions; and men, perhaps just emerged from the mine or the prison, with the scars or mutilations of their recent tortures upon their bodies, were seen exposing their lives, if possible, to a more honorable martyrdom: as before the voluntary victims of Christian faith, so now of Christian charity. Yet the Heathen party, instead of being subdued, persisted in attributing this terrible scourge to the impiety of the Christians, which provoked the angry gods; nor can we wonder if the zeal of Cyprian retorted the argument, and traced rather the retributive justice of the Almighty to the wanton persecutions inflicted on the unoffending Christians.

A.D. 252.
Conduct of
Cyprian and
the Chris-
tians.

Cyprian did not again withdraw on the commencement of the Valerian persecution. He was summoned before the proconsul, who com-
Cyprian's
retreat.
municated his instructions from the emperor, to compel all those who professed foreign religions to offer sacrifice. Cyprian refused, with tranquil determination. He was banished from Carthage. He remained in his pleasant retreat rather than place of exile, in the small town of Ceribis, near the sea-shore, in a spot shaded with verdant groves, and with a clear and healthful stream of water. It was provided with every comfort, and even luxury, in which the austere nature of Cyprian would permit itself to in-

dulge.¹ But, when his hour came, the tranquil and collected dignity of Cyprian in no respect fell below his lofty principles.

On the accession of a new proconsul, Galerius Maximus, Cyprian was either recalled or permitted to return from his exile. He resided in his own gardens, from whence he received a summons to appear before the proconsul. He would not listen to the earnest solicitations of his friends, who entreated him again to consult his safety by withdrawing to some place of concealment. His trial was postponed for a day; he was treated, while in custody, with respect and even delicacy. But the intelligence of the apprehension of Cyprian drew together the whole city, — the Heathen, eager to behold the spectacle of his martyrdom; the Christians, to watch in their affectionate zeal at the doors of his prison. In the morning, he had to walk some distance, and was violently heated by the exertion. A Christian soldier offered to procure him dry linen, apparently from mere courtesy, but, in reality, to obtain such precious relics, steeped in the “bloody sweat” of the martyr. Cyprian intimated that it was useless to seek remedy for inconveniences which perhaps would that day pass away for ever. After a short delay, the proconsul appeared. The examination was brief: “Art thou Thascius Cyprian, the bishop of so many impious men? The most sacred emperor commands thee to sacrifice.” Cyprian answered, “I will not sacrifice.” “Consider well,” rejoined the proconsul. “Execute your orders,”

¹ “If,” says Pontius, who visited his master in his retirement, “instead of this sunny and agreeable spot, it had been a waste and rocky solitude, the angels which fed Elijah and Daniel would have ministered to the holy Cyprian.”

answered Cyprian: "the case admits of no consideration."

Galerius consulted with his council, and then reluctantly¹ delivered his sentence. "Thascius Cyprian, thou hast lived long in thy impiety, and assembled around thee many men involved in the same wicked conspiracy. Thou hast shown thyself an enemy alike to the gods and the laws of the empire; the pious and sacred emperors have in vain endeavored to recall thee to the worship of thy ancestors. Since, then, thou hast been the chief author and leader of these most guilty practices, thou shalt be an example to those whom thou hast deluded to thy unlawful assemblies. Thou must expiate thy crime with thy blood." Cyprian said, "God be thanked!"² The Bishop of Carthage was carried into a neighboring field, and beheaded. He maintained his serene composure to the last. It was remarkable, that, but a few days afterwards, the proconsul died. Though he had been in bad health, this circumstance was not likely to be lost upon the Christians.

Everywhere, indeed, the public mind was no doubt strongly impressed with the remarkable fact, which the Christians would lose no opportunity of enforcing on the awe-struck attention, that their enemies appeared to be the enemies of Heaven. An early and a fearful fate appeared to be the inevitable lot of the persecutors of Christianity.

Miserable
death of the
persecutors of
Christianity.

¹ In the Acta, *vix ægrè* is the expression: it may, however, mean that he spoke with difficulty, on account of his bad health.

² I have translated this sentence, as the Acts of Cyprian are remarkable for their simplicity, and total absence of later legendary ornament; and particularly for the circumstantial air of truth with which they do justice to the regularity of the whole proceeding. Compare the Life of Cyprian by the Deacon Pontius; the Acts, in Ruinart, p. 216; Cave's Lives of the Apostles, &c., art. "Cyprian."

Their profound and earnest conviction that the hand of Divine Providence was perpetually and visibly interposing in the affairs of men would not be so deeply imbued with the spirit of their Divine Master as to suppress the language of triumph, or even of vengeance, when the enemies of their God and of themselves either suffered defeat and death, or, worse than an honorable death, a cruel and insulting captivity. The death of Decius, according to the Pagan account, had been worthy of the old republic. He was environed by the Goths; his son was killed by an arrow; he cried aloud that the loss of a single soldier was nothing to the glory of the empire; he renewed the battle, and fell valiantly. The Christian writers strip away all the more ennobling incidents. According to their account, having been decoyed by the enemy, or misled by a treacherous friend, into a marsh where he could neither fight nor fly, he perished tamely, and his unburied body was left to the beasts and carrion fowls.¹ The captivity of Valerian, the mystery which hung over his death, allowed ample scope to the imagination of those whose national hatred of the barbarians would attribute the most unmanly ferocity to the Persian conqueror, and of those who would consider their God exalted by the most cruel and debasing sufferings inflicted on the oppressor of the Church. Valerian, it was said, was forced to bend his back that the proud conqueror might mount his horse, as from a footstool; his skin was flayed off (according to one more modern account, while he was alive), stuffed, and exposed to the mockery of the Persian rabble.

The luxurious and versatile Gallienus restored peace
Gallienus alone. to the Church. The edict of Valerian was
A.D. 260. rescinded; the bishops resumed their public

¹ Orat. Constant. apud Euseb. c. xxiv. Lactant., De Mort. Persec.

functions; the buildings were restored; and their property, which had been confiscated by the state, restored to the rightful owners.¹

The last transient collision of Christianity with the Government before its final conflict under Dio-
Aurelian.
A.D. 271-275
cletian, took place, or was at least threatened, during the administration of the great Aurelian. The reign of Aurelian, occupied by warlike campaigns in every part of the world, left little time for attention to the internal police or the religious interests of the empire. The mother of Aurelian was priestess of the Sun at Sirmium; and the emperor built a temple to that deity, his tutelary god, at Rome. But the dangerous wars of Aurelian required the concurrent aid of all the deities who took an interest in the fate of Rome. The sacred ceremony of consulting the Sibylline books, in whose secret and mysterious leaves were written the destinies of Rome, took place at his command. The severe emperor reproaches the senate for their want of faith in these mystic volumes, or of zeal in the public service, as though they had been infected by the principles of Christianity.²

But there were no hostile measures taken against Christianity in the early part of his reign; and he was summoned to take upon himself the extraordinary office of arbiter in a Christian controversy. A new empire seemed rising in the East, under the warlike Queen of Palmyra. Zenobia extended her protection, with politic indifference, to Jew, to Pagan, and to Christian. It might also appear that a kindred spiritual ambition animated her favorite Paul
Paul of
Samosata.
of Samosata, the Bishop of Antioch; and

¹ Euseb. vii. 13; x. 23.

² Read the Life of Aurelian by Vopiscus, one of the best, at least most careful, in that unequal collection.

that he aspired to found a new religion, adapted to the kingdom of Palmyra, by blending together the elements of Paganism, of Judaism, and of Christianity. Ambitious, dissolute, and rapacious, according to the representation of his adversaries, Paul of Samosata had been advanced to the important see of Antioch ; but the zealous vigilance of the neighboring bishops soon discovered, that Paul held opinions, as to the mere human nature of the Saviour, more nearly allied to Judaism than to the Christian creed. The pride, the wealth, the state, of Paul, no less offended the feelings, and put to shame the more modest demeanor and the humbler pretensions of former prelates. He had obtained, either from the Roman authorities or from Zenobia, a civil magistracy, and prided himself more on his title of ducenary than of Christian bishop. He passed through the streets environed by guards, and preceded and followed by multitudes of attendants and supplicants, whose petitions he received and read with the stately bearing of a public officer rather than the affability of a prelate. His conduct in the ecclesiastical assemblies was equally overbearing: he sat on a throne, and, while he indulged himself in every kind of theatric gesture, resented the silence of those who did not receive him with applause, or pay homage to his dignity. His magnificence disturbed the modest solemnity of the ordinary worship. Instead of the simpler music of the church, the hymns, in which the voices of the worshippers mingled in fervent, if less harmonious, unison, Paul organized a regular choir, in which the soft tones of female voices, in their more melting and artificial cadences, sometimes called to mind the voluptuous rites of Paganism, and could not be heard without shuddering by those

accustomed to the more unadorned ritual.¹ The Hosannas, sometimes introduced as a kind of salutation to the bishop, became, it was said, the chief part of the service, which was rather to the glory of Paul than of the Lord. This introduction of a new and effeminate ceremonial would of itself, with its rigid adversaries, have formed a ground for the charge of dissolute morals, against which may be fairly urged the avowed patronage of the severe Zenobia.² But the pomp of Paul's expenditure did not interfere with the accumulation of considerable wealth, which he extorted from the timid zeal of his partisans, and, it was said, by the venal administration of the judicial authority of his episcopate, perhaps of his civil magistracy. But Paul by no means stood alone: he had a powerful party among the ecclesiastical body, the chorepiscopi of the country districts, and the presbyters of the city. He set at defiance the synod of bishops, who pronounced a solemn sentence of excommunication;³ and, secure under the protection of the Queen of Palmyra, if her ambition should succeed in wresting Syria, with its noble capital, from the power of Rome, and in maintaining her strong and influential position between the conflicting powers of Persia and the empire, Paul might hope to share in her triumph, and establish his degenerate but splendid form of Christianity in the very seat of its primitive apostolic foundation. Paul had staked his success upon that of his warlike patroness; and, on the fall of Zenobia, the bishops appealed to Aurelian to expel the rebel

¹ Ὡν καὶ ἀκουσας ἂν τις φρίσσειεν. Such is the expression in the decree of excommunication issued by the bishops. Euseb. vii. 30.

² Compare Routh, Reliq. Sacr. ii. 505.

³ See the sentence in Eusebius, vii. 30, and in Routh, Reliquiæ Sacrae li. 465 et seq

against their authority, and the partisan of the Palmyrenes, who had taken arms against the majesty of the empire, from his episcopal dignity at Antioch. Aurelian did not altogether refuse to interfere in this unprecedented cause, but, with laudable impartiality, declined any actual cognizance of the affair, and transferred the sentence from the personal enemies of Paul, the Bishops of Syria, to those of Rome and Italy. By their sentence, Paul was degraded from his episcopate.

The sentiments of Aurelian changed towards Christianity near the close of his reign. The severity of his character, reckless of human blood, would not, if committed in the strife, have hesitated at any measures to subdue the rebellious spirit of his subjects. Sanguinary edicts were issued, though his death prevented their general promulgation; and in the fate of Aurelian the Christians discovered another instance of the divine vengeance, which appeared to mark their enemies with the sign of inevitable and appalling destruction.

Till the reign of Diocletian, the churches reposed in undisturbed but enervating security.

CHAPTER IX.

The Persecution under Diocletian.

THE final contest between Paganism and Christianity drew near. Almost three hundred years had elapsed since the divine Author of the new religion had entered upon his mortal life in a small village in Palestine;¹ and now, having gained so A.D. 284. powerful an ascendancy over the civilized world, the Gospel was to undergo its last and most trying ordeal, before it should assume the reins of empire, and become the established religion of the Roman world. It was to sustain the deliberate and systematic attack of the temporal authority, arming, in almost every part of the empire, in defence of the ancient Polytheism. At this crisis, it is important Peace of the Christians. to survey the state of Christianity, as well as the character of the sovereign and of the government, which made this ultimate and most vigorous attempt to suppress the triumphant progress of the new faith.

The last fifty years, with a short interval of menaced, probably of actual, persecution, during the reign of Aurelian, had passed in peace and security. The Christians had become, not merely a public, but an imposing and influential, body; their separate existence had been recognized by the law of Gallienus; their churches had arisen in most of the cities of the

¹ Diocletian began his reign A.D. 284. The commencement of the persecution is dated A.D. 303.

empire, — as yet, probably, with no great pretensions to architectural grandeur, though no doubt ornamented by the liberality of the worshippers, and furnished with vestments, and with chalices, lamps, and chandeliers of silver. The number of these buildings was constantly on the increase, or the crowding multitudes of proselytes demanded the extension of the narrow and humble walls. The Christians no longer declined, or refused to aspire to, the honors of the state. They filled offices of distinction, and even of supreme authority, in the provinces and in the army; they were exempted, either by tacit connivance or direct in

Progress of
Christianity.

dulgence, from the accustomed sacrifices. Among the more immediate attendants on the emperor, two or three openly professed the Christian faith. Prisca the wife, and Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian and wife of Galerius, were suspected, if not avowed, partakers of the Christian mysteries.¹ If it be impossible to form the most remote approximation to their relative numbers with that of the Pagan population, it is equally erroneous to estimate their strength and influence by numerical calculation. All political changes are wrought by a compact, organized, and disciplined minority. The mass of mankind are shown by experience, and appear fated by the constitution of our nature, to follow any vigorous impulse from a determined and incessantly aggressive few.

Relaxation of
Christian
morals, —
of Christian
charity.

The long period of prosperity had produced in the Christian community its usual consequences, — some relaxation of morals; but Christian charity had probably suffered more than Christian purity. The more flourishing

¹ Euseb., Ecc. Hist. viii. 1.

and extensive the community, the more the pride, perhaps the temporal advantages, of superiority, predominated over the Christian motives which led men to aspire to the supreme functions in the Church. Sacerdotal domination began to exercise its awful powers, and the bishop to assume the language and the authority of the vicegerent of God. Feuds distracted the bosom of the peaceful communities, and disputes sometimes proceeded to open violence. Such is the melancholy confession of the Christians themselves, who, according to the spirit of the times, considered the dangers and the afflictions to which they were exposed in the light of divine judgments; and deplored, perhaps with something of the exaggeration of religious humiliation, the visible decay of holiness and peace.¹ But it is the strongest proof of the firm hold of a party, whether religious or political, upon the public mind, when it may offend with impunity against its own primary principles. That which at one time is a sign of incurable weakness or approaching dissolution, at another seems but the excess of healthful energy and the evidence of unbroken vigor.

The acts of Diocletian are the only trustworthy history of his character. The son of a slave, or, at all events, born of obscure and doubtful parentage, who could force his way to sovereign Diocletian. power, conceive and accomplish the design of reconstructing the whole empire, must have been a man, at least, of strong political courage; of profound, if not always wise and statesmanlike, views. In the person of Diocletian, the Emperor of Rome became an Oriental monarch. The old republican forms were disdainfully cast aside; consuls and tribunes gave way to new

¹ Esueb., Ecc. Hist. viii. 1.

officers, with adulatory and un-Roman appellations Diocletian himself assumed the new title of Dominus or Lord, which gave offence even to the servile and flexible religion of his Pagan subjects, who reluctantly at first, paid the homage of adoration to the master of the world.

Nor was the ambition of Diocletian of a narrow or personal character. With the pomp, he did not affect the solitude, of an Eastern despot.

Diocletian.
Change in the
state of the
empire.

The necessity of the state appeared to demand the active and perpetual presence of more than one person invested with sovereign authority, who might organize the decaying forces of the different divisions of the empire against the menacing hosts of barbarians on every frontier. Two Augusti and two Cæsars shared the dignity and the cares of the public administration,¹—a measure, if expedient for the security, fatal to the prosperity, of the exhausted provinces, which found themselves burdened with the maintenance of four imperial establishments. A new system of taxation was imperatively demanded and relentlessly introduced;² while the emperor seemed to mock the bitter and ill-suppressed murmurs of the provinces, by his lavish expenditure in magnificent and ornamental buildings. That was attributed to the avarice of Diocletian which arose out of the change in the form of government, and in some degree out of his sumptuous taste in that particular department, the embellishment, not of Rome only, but of the chief cities of the empire,—Milan, Carthage, and Nicomedia. At

¹ In the *Leben Constantins des Grossen*, by Manso, there is a good discussion on the authority and relative position of the Augusti and the Cæsars.

² The extension of the rights of citizenship to the whole empire by Caracalla made it impossible to maintain the exemptions and immunities which that privilege had thus lavishly conferred.

one time, the all-pervading Government aspired, after a season of scarcity, to regulate the prices of all commodities, and of all interchange, whether of labor or of bargain and sale, between man and man. This singular and gigantic effort of well-meaning but mistaken despotism has come to light in the present day.¹

Among the innovations introduced by Diocletian, none, perhaps, was more closely connected with the interests of Christianity than the Neglect of Rome. virtual degradation of Rome from the capital of the empire, by the constant residence of the emperor in other cities. Though the old metropolis was not altogether neglected in the lavish expenditure of the public wealth upon new edifices, either for the convenience of the people or the splendor of public solemnities, yet a larger share fell to the lot of other towns, particularly of Nicomedia.² In this city, the emperor more frequently displayed the new state of his imperial court, while Rome was rarely honored by his presence. Nor was his retreat, when wearied with political strife, on the Campanian coast, in the Bay of Baiæ, which the older Romans had girt with their splendid seats of retirement and luxury: it was on the Illyrian and barbarous side of the Adriatic that the palace of Diocletian arose, and his agricultural establishment spread its narrow belt of fertility. The removal of the seat of government more clearly discovered the magnitude of the danger to the existing institutions from the progress of Christianity. The East was, no doubt, more fully peopled with Christians than any

¹ Edict of Diocletian, published and illustrated by Col. Leake. It is alluded to in the treatise, *De Mortibus Persecut.* C. vii.

² "*Ita semper dementabat, Nicodemiam studens arbi Romæ cœquare.*"
— *De Mort. Persecut.* C. vii.

part of the Western world, unless perhaps the province of Africa; at all events, their relative rank, wealth, and importance, much more nearly balanced that of the adherents of the old Polytheism.¹ In Rome, the ancient majesty of the national religion must still have kept down in comparative obscurity the aspiring rivalry of Christianity. The prætor still made way for the pontifical order, and submitted his fasces to the vestal virgin, while the Christian bishop pursued his humble and unmarked way. The modest church or churches of the Christians lay hid, no doubt, in some sequestered street or in the obscure Transteverine region, and did not venture to contrast themselves with the stately temples on which the ruling people of the world and the sovereigns of mankind had for ages lavished their treasures. However the church of the metropolis of the world might maintain a high rank in Christian estimation, might boast its antiquity, its apostolic origin, or at least of being the scene of apostolic martyrdom, and might number many distinguished proselytes in all ranks, even in the imperial court; still Paganism, in this stronghold of its most gorgeous pomp, its hereditary sanctity, its intimate connection with all the institutions, and its incorporation with the

¹ Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 37. Mr. Coneybeare (*Bampton Lectures*, p. 345) has drawn a curious inference from a passage in this chapter of Tertullian, that the majority of those who had a right of citizenship in those cities had embraced the Christian faith, while the mobs were its most furious opponents. It appears unquestionable, that the strength of Christianity lay in the middle, perhaps the mercantile, classes. The last two books of the *Paidagogos* of Clement of Alexandria, the most copious authority for Christian manners at that time, inveigh against the vices of an opulent and luxurious community, — splendid dresses, jewels, gold and silver vessels, rich banquets, gilded litters and chariots, and private baths. The ladies kept Indian birds, Median peacocks, monkeys, and Maltese dogs, instead of maintaining widows and orphans; the men had multitudes of slaves. The sixth chapter of the third book — “That the Christian alone is rich” — would have been unmeaning if addressed to a poor community.

whole ceremonial of public affairs,—in Rome must have maintained at least its outward supremacy.¹ But, in comparison with the less imposing dignity of the municipal government or the local priesthood, the Bishop of Antioch or Nicomedia was a far greater person than the predecessor of the popes among the consulars and the senate, the hereditary aristocracy of the old Roman families or the ministers of the ruling emperor. In Nicomedia, the Christian church, an edifice at least of considerable strength and solidity, stood on an eminence commanding the town, and conspicuous above the palace of the sovereign.

Diocletian might seem born to accomplish that revolution which took place so soon after, under the reign of Constantine. The new constitution of the empire might appear to require a reconstruction of the religious system. The emperor, who had not scrupled to accommodate the form of the government, without respect to the ancient majesty of Rome, to the present position of affairs; to degrade the capital itself into the rank of a provincial city; and to prepare the way, at least, for the removal of the seat of government to the East,—would have been withheld by no scruples of veneration for ancient rites or ancestral ceremonies, if the establishment of a new religion had

Religion of
Diocletian.

¹ In a letter of Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, written during or soon after the reign of Decius, the ministerial establishment of the church in Rome is thus stated: One bishop; forty-six presbyters; seven deacons; seven subdeacons; forty-two acolyths or attendants; fifty-two exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers; fifteen hundred widows and poor.—Euseb. vi. 43.

Optatus (lib. ii.) states that there were more than forty churches in Rome at the time of the persecution of Diocletian. It has been usual to calculate one church for each presbyter; which would suppose a falling-off, at least no increase, during the interval. But some of the presbyters reckoned by Cornelius may have been superannuated or in prison, and their place supplied by others.

appeared to harmonize with his general policy. But his mind was not yet ripe for such a change, nor perhaps his knowledge of Christianity and its profound and unseen influence sufficiently extensive. In his assumption of the title Jovius, while his colleague took that of Herculus, Diocletian gave a public pledge of his attachment to the old Polytheism. Among the cares of his administration, he by no means neglected

the purification of the ancient religions.¹ In
New Pagan-ism. Paganism itself, that silent but manifest change, of which we have already noticed the commencement, had been creeping on. The new philosophic Polytheism which Julian attempted to establish on the ruins of Christianity was still endeavoring to supersede the older poetic faith of the Heathen nations. It had not even yet come to sufficient maturity to offer itself as a formidable antagonist to the religion of Christ. This new Paganism, as has been observed, arose out of the alliance of the philosophy and the religion of the old world. These once implacable adversaries had reconciled their differences, and coalesced against the common enemy. Christianity itself had no slight influence upon the formation of the new system; and now an Eastern element, more and more strongly dominant, mingled with the whole, and lent it, as it were, a visible object of worship. From Christianity, the new Paganism had adopted the Unity of the Deity, and scrupled not to degrade all the gods of the older world into subordinate
Worship of the Sun. demons or ministers. The Christians had incautiously held the same language: both concurred in the name of demons; but the Pagans used the phrase in the Platonic sense, as good but sub-

¹ "Veterrimæ religiones castissimè curatæ." — Aurel. Vict., De Cæsar.

ordinate spirits, while the same term spoke to the Christian ear as expressive of malignant and diabolic agency. But the Jupiter Optimus Maximus was not the great Supreme of the new system. The universal deity of the East, the Sun, to the philosophic was the emblem or representative; to the vulgar, the Deity. Diocletian himself, though he paid so much deference to the older faith as to assume the title of Jovius, as belonging to the Lord of the world, yet, on his accession, when he would exculpate himself from all concern in the murder of his predecessor Numerian, appealed in the face of the army to the all-seeing deity of the Sun. It is the oracle of Apollo of Miletus, consulted by the hesitating emperor, which is to decide the fate of Christianity. The metaphorical language of Christianity had unconsciously lent strength to this new adversary; and, in adoring the visible orb, some, no doubt, supposed that they were not departing far from the worship of the "Sun of Righteousness."¹

But, though it might enter into the imagination of an imperious and powerful sovereign to fuse together all these conflicting faiths, the new Paganism was beginning to advance itself as the open and most dangerous adversary of the religion of Christ. Hierocles, the great hierophant of the Platonic Paganism, is distinctly named as the author of the persecution under Diocletian.²

Thus, then, an irresistible combination of circumstances tended to precipitate the fatal crisis. The

¹ Hermogenes, one of the older heresiarchs, applied the text, "He has placed his tabernacle in the sun," to Christ; and asserted that Christ had put off his body in the sun. — Pantænus ap. Routh, *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, i. 339.

² Another philosophic writer published a work against the Christians. See Fleury, p. 452, from Tertullian.

whole political scheme of Diocletian was incomplete, unless some distinct and decided course was taken with these self-governed corporations, who rendered, according to the notions of the time, such imperfect allegiance to the sovereign power. But the cautious disposition of Diocletian; his deeper insight, perhaps, into the real nature of the struggle which would take place; his advancing age; and, possibly, the latent and depressing influence of the malady which may then have been hanging over him, and which, a short time after, brought him to the brink of the grave,¹—these concurrent motives would induce him to shrink from violent measures; to recommend a more temporizing policy; and to consent, with difficult reluctance, to the final committal of the imperial authority in a contest in which the complete submission of the opposite party could only be expected by those who were altogether ignorant of its strength. The imperial power had much to lose in an unsuccessful contest: it was likely to gain, if successful, only a temporary and external conquest. On the one hand, it was urged by the danger of permitting a vast and self-governed body to co-exist with the general institutions of the empire: on the other, if not a civil war, a contest which would array one part of almost every city of the empire against the other in domestic hostility, might appear even of more perilous consequence to the public welfare.

The party of the old religion, now strengthened by the accession of the philosophic faction, risked nothing,

¹ The charge of derangement, which rests on the authority of Constantine, as related by Eusebius, is sufficiently confuted by the dignity of his abdication, the placid content with which he appeared to enjoy his peaceful retreat, the respect paid to him by his turbulent and ambitious colleagues, and the involuntary influence which he still appeared to exercise over the affairs of the empire.

and might expect much, from the vigorous, systematic, and universal intervention of the civil authority. It was clear that nothing less would restore its superiority to the decaying cause of Polytheism. Nearly three centuries of tame and passive connivance, or of open toleration, had only increased the growing power of Christianity, while it had not in the least allayed that spirit of moral conquest which avowed that its ultimate end was the total extinction of idolatry.

Sentiments of
the philo-
sophic party.

But in the army the parties were placed in more inevitable opposition; and in the army commenced the first overt acts of hostility, which were the prognostics of the general persecution.¹ Nowhere did the old Roman religion retain so much hold upon the mind as among the sacred eagles. Without sacrifice to the givers of victory, the superstitious soldiery would advance, divested of their usual confidence, against the enemy; and defeat was ascribed to some impious omission in the ceremonial of propitiating the gods. The Christians now formed no unimportant part in the army: though permitted by the ruling authorities to abstain from idolatrous conformity, their contempt of the auspices which promised, and of the rites which insured, the divine favor, would be looked upon with equal awe and animosity. The unsuccessful general and the routed army would equally seize every excuse to cover the misconduct of the one, or the cowardice of the other. In the pride of victory, the present deities of Rome would share the honor with Roman valor; the assistance of the Christians would be forgotten in defeat; the resentment of the gods, to whom

¹ Ἐκ τῶν ἐν στρατείᾳ ἀδελφῶν καταρχομένων τοῦ διωγμοῦ. — Euseb
viii. 1. Compare ch. iv.

that defeat would be attributed, would be ascribed by the Pagans to the impiety of their godless comrades. An incident of this kind took place, during one of his campaigns, in the presence of Diocletian. The army was assembled around the altar; the sacrificing priest in vain sought for the accustomed signs in the entrails of the victim; the sacrifice was again and again repeated, but always with the same result. The baffled soothsayer, trembling with awe or with indignation, denounced the presence of profane strangers. The Christians had been seen to make, perhaps boasted that they had made, the sign of the cross, and put to flight the impotent demons of idolatrous worship. They were apprehended, and commanded to sacrifice; and a general edict was issued, that all who refused to pay honor to the martial deities of Rome should be expelled from the army. It is far from improbable that frequent incidents of this nature may have occurred; if, in the unsuccessful campaign of Galerius in the East, nothing was more likely to embitter the mind of that violent emperor against the whole community. Nor would this animosity be allayed by the success with which Galerius retrieved his former failure. While the impiety of the Christians would be charged with all the odium of defeat, they would never be permitted to participate in the glories of victory.

During the winter of the year of Christ 302-3, the great question of the policy to be adopted towards the Christians was debated, first in a private conference between Diocletian and Galerius. Diocletian, though urged by his more vehement partner in the empire, was averse from sanguinary proceedings, from bloodshed and confusion; he was inclined to more temperate measures, which would

Deliberations
concerning
Christianity.

degrade the Christians from every post of rank or authority, and expel them from the palace and the army. The palace itself was divided by conflicting factions. Some of the chief officers of Diocletian's household openly professed Christianity; his wife and his daughter were at least favorably disposed to the same cause; while the mother of Galerius, a fanatical worshipper, probably of Cybele, was seized with a spirit of proselytism, and celebrated almost every day a splendid sacrifice, followed by a banquet, at which she required the presence of the whole court. The pertinacious resistance of the Christians provoked her implacable resentment, and her influence over her son was incessantly employed to inflame his mind to more active animosity.

Diocletian at length consented to summon a council, formed of some persons versed in the adminis-
tration of the law, and some military men. Council

Of these, one party were already notoriously hostile to Christianity;¹ the rest were courtiers, who bent to every intimation of the imperial favor. Diocletian still prolonged his resistance,² till, either to give greater solemnity to the decree, or to identify their measures more completely with the cause of Polytheism, it was determined to consult the oracle of Apollo at Miletus. The answer of the oracle might be anticipated; and Diocletian submitted to the irresistible united authority of his friends, of Galerius, and of the god, and contented himself with moderating the severity of the edict.

¹ Hierocles, the philosopher, was probably a member of this council. — Mosheim, p. 922.

² According to the unfriendly representation of the author of the treatise, *De Mort. Pers.*, whose view of Diocletian's character is confirmed by Eutropius, it was the crafty practice of Diocletian to assume all the merit of popular measures as emanating from himself alone, while, in those which were unpopular, he pretended to act altogether by the advice of others.

Galerius proposed that all who refused to sacrifice should be burned alive: Diocletian stipulated that there should be no loss of life.

A fortunate day was chosen for the execution of the imperial decree. The Feast of Terminalia was inseparably connected with the stability of the Roman power,—that power which was so manifestly endangered by the progress of Christianity. At the dawn of day, the prefect of the city appeared at the door of the church in Nicomedia, attended by the officers of the city and of the court. The doors were instantly thrown down; the Pagans beheld with astonishment the vacant space, and sought in vain for the statue of the deity. The sacred books were instantly burned, and the rest of the furniture of the building plundered by the tumultuous soldiery. The emperors commanded from the palace a full view of the tumult and spoliation, for the church stood on a height at no great distance; and Galerius wished to enjoy the spectacle of a conflagration of the building. The more prudent Diocletian, fearing that the fire might spread to the splendid edifices which adjoined it, suggested a more tardy and less imposing plan of demolition: The pioneers of the prætorian guard advanced with their tools, and in a few hours the whole building was razed to the ground.

Edict of persecution.

Its publication.

Its execution in Nicomedia.

The Christians made no resistance, but awaited in silent consternation the promulgation of the fatal edict. On the next morning it appeared. It was framed in terms of the sternest and most rigorous proscription, short of the punishment of death. It comprehended all ranks and orders under its sweeping and inevitable provisions. Throughout the empire, the churches

of the Christians were to be levelled with the ground: the public existence of the religion was thus to be annihilated. The sacred books were to be delivered, under pain of death, by their legitimate guardians, the bishops and presbyters, to the imperial officers, and publicly burnt. The philosophic party thus hoped to extirpate those pernicious writings with which they in vain contested the supremacy of the public mind.

The property of the churches, whether endowments in land or furniture, was confiscated; all public assemblies, for the purposes of worship, prohibited; the Christians of rank and distinction were degraded from all their offices, and declared incapable of filling any situation of trust or authority; those of the plebeian order were deprived of the right of Roman citizenship, which secured the sanctity of their persons from corporal chastisement or torture; slaves were declared incapable of claiming or obtaining liberty; the whole race were placed without the pale of the law, disqualified from appealing to its protection in case of wrong, as of personal injury, of robbery, or adultery; while they were liable to civil actions, bound to bear all the burdens of the state, and amenable to all its penalties. In many places, an altar was placed before the tribunal of justice, on which the plaintiff was obliged to sacrifice, before his cause could obtain a hearing.¹

No sooner had this edict been affixed in the customary place, than it was torn down by the hand of a rash and indignant Christian, who added insult to his offence by a contemptuous inscription: "Such are the victories of the emperors over

Edict torn
down.

¹ Euseb. viii. 2. De Mort. Persecut. apud Lactantium.

the Goths and Sarmatians.”¹ This outrage on the imperial majesty was expiated by the death of the delinquent, who avowed his glorious crime. Although less discreet Christians might secretly dignify the sufferings of the victim with the honors of martyrdom, they could only venture to approve the patience with which he bore the agony of being roasted alive by a slow fire.²

The prudence or the moderation of Diocletian had rejected the more violent and sanguinary counsels of the Cæsar, who had proposed that all who refused to sacrifice should be burned alive. But his personal terrors triumphed over the lingering influence of com-
Fire in the
palace at
Nicomedia. passion or justice. On a sudden, a fire burst out in the palace of Nicomedia, which spread almost to the chamber of the emperor. The real origin of this fatal conflagration is unknown; and notwithstanding the various causes to which it was ascribed by the fears, the malice, and the superstition of the different classes, we may probably refer the whole to accident. It may have arisen from the hasty or injudicious construction of a palace built but recently. One account ascribes it to lightning. If this opinion obtained general belief among the Christian party, it would, no doubt, be considered by many a visible sign of the divine vengeance, on account of the promulgation of the imperial edict. The Christians were accused by the indignant voice of the Heathen; they retorted, by throwing the guilt upon the emperor Galerius, who had practised (so the ecclesiastical historian suggests) the part of a secret incendiary, in order to criminate the Christians, and alarm Diocletian into his more violent measures.”

¹ Mosheim, De Reb. Christ.² Euseb. viii. 5.³ Euseb. viii. 6

The obvious impolicy of such a measure, as the chance of actually destroying both their imperial enemies in the fire must have been very remote, and as it could only darken the subtle mind of Diocletian with the blackest suspicions and madden Galerius to more unmeasured hostility, must acquit the Christians of any such design, even if their high principles, their sacred doctrines of peaceful submission under the direst persecution, did not place them above all suspicion. The only Christian who would have incurred the guilt, or provoked upon his innocent brethren the danger, inseparable from such an act, would have been some desperate fanatic, like the man who tore down the edict. And such a man would have avowed and gloried in the act; he would have courted the ill-deserved honors of martyrdom. The silence of Constantine may clear Galerius of the darker charge of contriving, by these base and indirect means, the destruction of a party against which he proceeded with undisguised hostility. Galerius, however, as if aware of the full effect with which such an event would work on the mind of Diocletian, immediately left Nicomedia, declaring that he could not consider his person safe within that city.

The consequences of this fatal conflagration were disastrous, to the utmost extent which their worst enemies could desire, to the whole Christian community. The officers of the household, the inmates of the palace, were exposed to the most cruel tortures, by the order, it is said in the presence, of Diocletian. Even the females of the imperial family were not exempt, if from the persecution, from that suspicion which demanded the clearest evidence of their Paganism. Prisca and Valeria were constrained to pollute

themselves with sacrifice; the powerful eunuchs, Dorotheus and Gorgonius and Andreas, suffered death; Anthimus, the Bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded. Many were executed, many burnt alive, many laid bound, with stones round their necks, in boats, rowed into the midst of the lake, and thrown into the water.

From Nicomedia, the centre of the persecution, the imperial edicts were promulgated, though with less than the usual rapidity, through the East. Letters were despatched requiring the co-operation of the Western emperors, Maximian,

April 18.

the associate of Diocletian, and the Cæsar Constantius, in the restoration of the dignity of the ancient religion, and the suppression of the hostile faith. Constantius made a show of concurrence in the measures of his colleagues; he commanded the demolition of the churches, but abstained from all violence against the persons of the Christians.¹ Gaul alone, his favored province, was not defiled by Christian blood. The fiercer temper of Maximian only awaited the signal, and readily acceded, to carry into effect the barbarous edicts of his colleagues.

In almost every part of the world, Christianity found itself at once assailed by the full force of the civil power, constantly goaded on by the united influence of the Pagan priesthood and the philosophic party. Nor was Diocletian, now committed in the desperate strife, content with the less tyrannical and

¹ Eusebius, whose panegyric on Constantine throws back some of its adulation upon his father, makes Constantius a Christian, with the Christian service regularly performed in his palace. — Vit. Constant. c. 33. The exaggeration of this statement is exposed by Pagi, ad ann. 303, n. viii. Mosheim, De Rebus ante Const. Mag. p. 929-935.

sanguinary edict of Nicomedia. Vague rumors of insurrection, some tumultuary risings in regions which were densely peopled with Christians, and even the enforced assumption of the purple by two adventurers, one in Armenia, another in Antioch, seemed to countenance the charges of political ambition, and the design of armed and vigorous resistance.

It is the worst evil of religious contests, that the civil power cannot retract without the humiliating confession of weakness, and must go on increasing in the severity of its measures. It soon finds that there is no success short of the extermination of the adversary; and it has but the alternative of acknowledged failure or this internecine warfare. The demolition of the churches might remove objects offensive to the wounded pride of the dominant Polytheism; the destruction of the sacred books might gratify the jealous hostility of the philosophic party; but not a single community was dissolved. The precarious submission of the weaker Christians only confirmed the more resolute opposition of the stronger and more heroic adherents of Christianity.

Edict followed edict, rising in regular gradations of angry barbarity. The whole clergy were declared enemies of the state; they were seized wherever a hostile prefect chose to put forth his boundless authority; and bishops, presbyters, and deacons were crowded into the prisons intended for the basest malefactors. A new rescript prohibited the liberation of any of these prisoners, unless they should consent to offer sacrifice.

During the promulgation of these rescripts, Diocletian celebrated his triumph in Rome; he held a conference with the Cæsar of Africa, who entered into

his rigorous measures. On his return to Nicomedia, he was seized with that long and depressing illness, malady, which, whether or not it affected him with temporary derangement, secluded him within the impenetrable precincts of the palace, whose sacred secrets were forbidden to be betrayed to the popular ear. This rigid concealment gave currency to every kind of gloomy rumor. The whole Roman world awaited with mingled anxiety, hope, and apprehension, the news of his dissolution. Diocletian, to the universal astonishment, appeared again in the robes of empire; to the still greater general astonishment, he appeared only to lay them aside, to abdicate the throne, and to retire to the peaceful occupation of his palace and agricultural villa on the Illyrian shore of the Adriatic. His colleague Maximian, with ill-dissembled reluctance, followed the example of his associate, patron, and co-adjutor in the empire.

The great scheme of Diocletian, the joint administration of the empire by the associate Augusti, with their subordinate Cæsars, if it had averted for a time the dismemberment of the empire, and had infused some vigor into the provincial governments, had introduced other evils of appalling magnitude; but its fatal consequences were more manifest directly the master hand was withdrawn which had organized the new machine of government. Fierce jealousy succeeded at once among the rival emperors to decent concord; all subordination was lost; and a succession of civil wars

between the contending sovereigns distracted the whole world. The earth groaned under the separate tyranny of its many masters; and, according to the strong expression of a rhetorical writer,

General
misery.

the grinding taxation had so exhausted the proprietors and the cultivators of the soil, the merchants, and the artisans, that none remained to tax but beggars.¹ The sufferings of the Christians, however, still inflicted with unremitting barbarity, were lost in the common sufferings of mankind. The rights of Roman citizenship, which had been violated in their persons, were now universally neglected; and, to extort money, the chief persons of the towns, the unhappy decurions, who were responsible for the payment of the contributions, were put to the torture. Even the punishment, the roasting by a slow fire,—invented to force the conscience of the devout Christians,—was borrowed, in order to wring the reluctant impost from the unhappy provincial.

The abdication of Diocletian left the most implacable enemy of Christianity, Galerius, master of the East; and in the East the persecution of the Christians, as well as the general oppression of the subjects of the empire, continued in unmitigated severity. The nephew of Galerius the Cæsar, Maximin Daïas, was the legitimate heir to his relentless violence of temper, and to his stern hostility to the Christian name. In the West, the assumption of the purple by Maxentius, the son of the abdicated Maximian (Herculius), had no unfavorable effect on the situation of the Christians. They suffered only with the rest of their fellow-subjects from the vices of Maxentius. If their matrons and virgins were not secure from his lust, it was the common lot of all who, although of the highest rank and dignity, might attract his insatiable passions. If a Christian matron, the wife of a

Galerius
Emperor
of the East.

Maximin
Daïas.

Maxentius

¹ De Mort. Persecut. c. xxiii.

senator, submitted to a voluntary death¹ rather than to the loss of her honor, it was her beauty, not her Christianity, which marked her out as the victim of the tyrant. It was not until Constantine began to develop his ambitious views of reuniting the dismembered monarchy, that Maxentius threw himself, as it were, upon the ancient gods of Rome, and identified his own cause with that of Polytheism.

At this juncture, all eyes were turned towards the elder son of Constantius. If not already recognized by the prophetic glance of devout hope as the first Christian sovereign of Rome, he seemed placed by providential wisdom as the protector, as the head, of the Christian interest. The enemies of Christianity were his; and if he was not, as yet, bound by the hereditary attachment of a son to the religion of his mother Helena, his father Constantius had bequeathed him the wise example of humanity and toleration. Placed as a hostage in the hands of Galerius, Constantine had only escaped from the honorable captivity of the Eastern court, where he had been exposed to constant peril of his life, by the promptitude and rapidity of his movements. He had fled, and during the first stages maimed the post-horses which might have been employed in his pursuit. During the persecution of Diocletian, Constantius alone, of all the emperors, by a dexterous appearance of submission, had screened the Christians of Gaul from the common lot of their brethren. Nor was it probable, that Constantine would render, on this point, more willing allegiance to the sanguinary mandates of Galerius. At present, however, Constantine stood rather aloof from the

¹ Euseb. viii. 14.

affairs of Italy and the East ; and, till the resumption of the purple by the elder Maximian, his active mind was chiefly employed in the consolidation of his own power in Gaul, and the repulse of the German barbarians who threatened the frontier of the Rhine.

Notwithstanding that the persecution had now lasted for six or seven years, in no part of the world did Christianity betray any signs of vital decay. It was far too deeply rooted in the minds of men, far too extensively promulgated, far too vigorously

A.D. 309

organized, not to endure this violent but unavailing shock. If its public worship was suspended, the believers met in secret, or cherished in the unassailable privacy of the heart the inalienable rights of conscience. If it suffered numerical loss, the body was not weakened by the severance of its more feeble and worthless members. The inert resistance of the general mass wearied out the vexatious and harassing measures of the Government.

Sufferings
of the
Christians.

Their numbers secured them against general extermination ; but, of course, the persecution fell most heavily upon the most eminent of the body,—upon men who were deeply pledged by the sense of shame and honor, even if, in any case, the nobler motives of conscientious faith and courageous confidence in the truth of the religion were wanting, to bear with unyielding heroism the utmost barbarities of the persecutor. Those who submitted performed the hated ceremony with visible reluctance, with trembling hand, averted countenance, and deep remorse of heart ; those who resisted to death were animated by the presence of multitudes, who, if they dared not applaud, could scarcely conceal their admiration. Women crowded to kiss the hems of their garments, and

their scattered ashes or unburied bones were stolen away by the devout zeal of their adherents, and already began to be treasured as incentives to faith and piety. It cannot be supposed, that the great functionaries of the state, the civil or military governors, could be so universally seared to humanity, or so incapable of admiring these frequent examples of patient heroism, as not either to mitigate in some degree the sufferings which they were bound to inflict, or even to feel some secret sympathy with the blameless victims whom they condemned. That sympathy might ripen, at a more fortunate period, into sentiments still more favorable to the Christian cause.

The most signal and unexpected triumph of Christianity was over the author of the persecution. While victory and success appeared to follow that party in the state which, if they had not as yet openly espoused the cause of Christianity, had unquestionably its most ardent prayers in their favor, the enemies of the Christians were smitten with the direst calamities, and the Almighty appeared visibly to exact the most awful vengeance for their sufferings. Galerius himself was forced, as it were, to implore mercy—not indeed in the attitude of penitence, but of profound humiliation—at the foot of the Christian altar. In the eighteenth year of his reign, the great persecutor lay expiring of a most loathsome malady. A deep and fetid ulcer preyed on the lower regions of his body, and ate them away into a mass of living corruption. It is certainly singular that the disease, vulgarly called being “eaten of worms,” should have been the destiny of Herod the Great, of Galerius, and of Philip II. of Spain. Physicians were sought from all quarters; every oracle was consulted in vain; that of Apollo suggested a

cure which aggravated the virulence of the disease. Not merely the chamber, the whole palace, of Galerius is described as infected by the insupportable stench which issued from his wound ; while the agonies which he suffered might have satiated the worst vengeance of the most unchristian enemy.

From the dying bed of Galerius issued an edict, which, while it condescended to apologize for the past severities against the Christians, Edict of Galerius, A.D. 311, April 30. under the specious plea of regard for the public welfare and the unity of the state, — while it expressed compassion for his deluded subjects, whom the Government was unwilling to leave in the forlorn condition of being absolutely without a religion, — admitted to the fullest extent the total failure of the severe measures for the suppression of Christianity.¹ It permitted the free and public exercise of the Christian religion. Its close was still more remarkable: it contained an earnest request to the Christians to intercede for the suffering emperor in their supplications to their God. Whether this edict was dictated by wisdom, by remorse, or by superstitious terror ; whether it was the act of a statesman, convinced by experience of the impolicy, or even the injustice, of his sanguinary acts ; whether, in the agonies of his excruciating disease, his conscience was harassed by the thought of his tortured victims ; or, having vainly solicited the assistance of his own deities, he would desperately endeavor to propitiate the favor, or, at least, allay the wrath, of the Christians' God, — the whole Roman world was witness of the public and humiliating acknowledgment of defeat extorted from the dying emperor. A few days after the promulgation of the edict, Galerius expired.

¹ Euseb., H. E. viii. 17.

The edict was issued from Sardica, in the name of
A.D. 311, Galerius, of Licinius, and of Constantine.
May. It accorded with the sentiments of the two
 latter: Maximin II. alone, the Cæsar of the East,
 whose peculiar jurisdiction extended over Syria and
 Egypt, rendered but an imperfect and reluctant obe-
 dience to the decree of toleration. His jealousy was,
 no doubt, excited by the omission of his name in the
 preamble to the edict; and he seized this excuse to
 discountenance its promulgation in his provinces. Yet
Conduct of for a time he suppressed his profound and in-
Maximin in veterate hostility to the Christian name. He
the East. permitted unwritten orders to be issued to the mu-
 nicipal governors of the towns, and to the magistrates
 of the villages, to put an end to all violent proceedings.
 The zeal of Sabinus, the prætorian prefect of the
 East, supposing the milder sentiments of Galerius to
 be shared by Maximin, seems to have outrun the in-
 tentions of the Cæsar. A circular rescript appeared
 in the name of Sabinus, echoing the tone, though it
 did not go quite to the length, of the imperial edict.
 It proclaimed that "it had been the anxious wish of
 the divinity of the most mighty emperors, to reduce the
 whole empire to pay a harmonious and united worship
 to the immortal gods. But their clemency had at
 length taken compassion on the obstinate perversity of
 the Christians, and determined on desisting from their
 ineffectual attempts to force them to abandon their he-
 reditary faith." The magistrates were instructed to
 communicate the contents of this letter to each other.
 The governors of the provinces, supposing at once that
 the letter of the prefect contained the real sentiments
 of the emperor, with merciful haste despatched orders
 to all persons in subordinate civil or military com-

mand, the magistrates both of the towns and the villages, who acted upon them with unhesitating obedience.¹

The cessation of the persecution showed at once its extent. The prison doors were thrown open; the mines rendered up their condemned laborers. Everywhere long trains of Christians were seen hastening to the ruins of their churches, and visiting the places sanctified by their former devotion. The public roads, the streets, and market-places of the towns were crowded with long processions, singing psalms of thanksgiving for their deliverance. Those who had maintained their faith under these severe trials passed triumphant in conscious, even if lowly pride, amid the flattering congratulations of their brethren; those who had failed in the hour of affliction hastened to re-unite themselves with their God, and to obtain re-admission into the flourishing and re-united fold. The Heathens themselves were astonished, it is said, at this signal mark of the power of the Christians' God, who had thus unexpectedly wrought so sudden a revolution in favor of his worshippers.²

But the cause of the Christians might appear not yet sufficiently avenged. The East, the great scene of persecution, was not restored to prosperity or peace. It had neither completed nor expiated the eight years of relentless persecution. The six months of apparent reconciliation were occupied by the Cæsar Maximin in preparing measures of more subtle and profound hostility. The situation of Maximin himself was critical and precarious. On the death of Galerius, he had seized on the government of the whole of Asia; and the forces

Maximin
hostile to
Christianity.

A.D. 311.

¹ Euseb. ix. 1.

² Euseb., H. E. ix. 1.

of the two emperors, Licinius and Maximin, watched each other on either side of the Bosphorus, with jealous and ill-dissembled hostility. Throughout the West, the emperors were favorable, or at least not inimical, to Christianity. The political difficulties, even the vices, of Maximin enforced the policy of securing the support of a large and influential body: he placed himself at the head of the Pagan interest in the East. A deliberate scheme was laid for the advancement of one party in the popular favor for the depression of the other. Measures were systematically taken to enfeeble the influence of Christianity, not by the authority of Government, but by poisoning the public mind, and infusing into it a settled and conscientious animosity. False Acts of Pilate were forged, intended to cast discredit on the Divine Founder of Christianity; they were disseminated with the utmost activity. The streets of Antioch and other Eastern cities were placarded with the most calumnious statements of the origin of the Christian faith. The instructors of youth were directed to introduce them as lessons into the schools, to make their pupils commit them to memory; and boys were heard repeating, or grown persons chanting, the most scandalous blasphemies against the object of Christian adoration.¹ In Damascus, the old arts of compelling or persuading women to confess that they had been present at the rites of the Christians, which had ended in lawless and promiscuous license, were renewed. The confession of some miserable prostitutes was submitted to the emperor, published by his command, and disseminated through

¹ In the speech attributed to S. Lucianus, previous to his martyrdom at Nicomedia, there is an allusion to these Acts of Pilate, which shows that they had made considerable impression on the public mind.—Routh, *Reliquiæ Sacre*, iii. 286.

out the Eastern cities, although the Christian rites had been long celebrated in those cities with the utmost publicity.¹

The second measure of Maximin was the re-organization of the Pagan religion in all its original pomp, and more than its ancient power. A complete hierarchy was established on the model of the Christian episcopacy. Provincial pontiffs, men of the highest rank, were nominated ; they were inaugurated with a solemn and splendid ceremonial, and were distinguished by a tunic of white. The emperor himself assumed the appointment to the pontifical offices in the different towns, which had in general rested with the local authorities. Persons of rank and opulence were prevailed on to accept these sacred functions, and were thus committed, by personal interest and corporate attachment, in the decisive struggle. Sacrifices were performed with the utmost splendor and regularity, and the pontiffs were invested with power to compel the attendance of all the citizens. The Christians were liable to every punishment or torture, short of death. The Pagan interest having thus become predominant in the greater cities, addresses were artfully suggested, and voted by the acclaiming multitude, imploring the interference of the emperor to expel these enemies of the established religion from their walls. The rescripts of the emperor were engraved on brass, and suspended in the public parts of the city. The example was set by Antioch, once the headquarters, and still, no doubt, a stronghold of Christianity. Theotecnus, the logistes or chamberlain of the city, took the lead. A splendid image was erected to Jupiter Philius, and dedicated with all the

¹ Euseb. viii. 14.

imposing pomp of mystery, perhaps of Eastern magic.¹ As though they would enlist that strong spirit of mutual attachment which bound the Christians together, the ancient Jupiter was invested in the most engaging and divine attribute of the God of Christianity: he was the God of Love. Nicomedia, the capital of the East, on the entrance of the emperor, presented an address to the same effect as those which had been already offered by Antioch, Tyre, and other cities; and the emperor affected to yield to this simultaneous expression of the general sentiment.

The first overt act of hostility was a prohibition to the Christians to meet in their cemeteries, where probably their enthusiasm was wrought to the utmost height by the sacred thoughts associated with the graves of their martyrs. But the policy of Maximin, in general, confined itself to vexatious and harassing oppression, and to other punishments, which inflicted the pain and wretchedness without the dignity of dying for the faith: the persecuted had the sufferings, but not the glory, of martyrdom. Such, most likely, were the general orders of Maximin, though, in some places, the zeal of his officers may have transgressed the prescribed limits, it must not be said, of humanity. The bishop and two inhabitants of Emesa, and Peter, the Patriarch of Alexandria, obtained the honors of death. Lucianus, the Bishop of Antioch, was sent to undergo a public examination at Nicomedia: he died in prison. The greater number of victims suffered the less merciful punishment of mutilation or blinding. The remonstrances of Constantine were unavailing; the emperor persisted in his cruel course, and is said to have con-

Persecutions
in the domin-
ions of Maxi-
min.

¹ Euseb. ix. 2, 3.

descended to an ingenious artifice to afflict the sensitive consciences of some persons of the higher orders who escaped less painful penalties. His banquets were served with victims previously slain in sacrifice, and his Christian guests were thus unconsciously betrayed into a crime which the authority of St. Paul had not yet convinced the more scrupulous believers to be a matter of perfect indifference.¹

The emperor, in his public rescript in answer to the address from the city of Tyre, had, as it were, placed the issue of the contest on an appeal to Heaven. The gods of Paganism were as-

The Pagans
appeal to the
flourishing
state of the
East.

serted to be the benefactors of the human race; through their influence, the soil had yielded its annual increase; the genial air had not been parched by fatal droughts; the sea had neither been agitated with tempests nor swept by hurricanes; the earth, instead of being rocked by volcanic convulsions, had been the peaceful and fertile mother of its abundant fruits. Their own neighborhood spoke the manifest favor of these benignant deities, in its rich fields waving with harvests, its flowery and luxuriant meadows, and in the mild and genial temperature of the air. A city so blest by its tutelary gods, in prudence as well as in justice, would expel those traitorous citizens whose impiety endangered these blessings, and would wisely purify its walls from the infection of their heaven-despising presence.

But peace and prosperity by no means ensued upon the depression of the Christians. Notwith-

Reverse.
A.D. 312.

standing the embellishment of the Heathen temples, the restoration of the Polytheistic ceremonial in more than ordinary pomp, and the nomination of

¹ Euseb. ix. 7.

the noblest citizens to the pontifical offices, every kind of calamity — tyranny, war, pestilence, and famine — depopulated the Asiatic provinces. Not the least scourge of the Pagan East was the Pagan emperor himself. Christian writers may have exaggerated, they can scarcely have invented, the vices of Maximin. His lusts violated alike the honor of noble and plebeian families. The eunuchs, the purveyors for his passions, traversed the provinces, marked out those who were distinguished by fatal beauty, and conducted these extraordinary perquisitions with the most insolent indignity: where milder measures would not prevail, force was used. Nor was tyranny content with the gratification of its own license: noble virgins, after having been dishonored by the emperor, were granted in marriage to his slaves; even those of the highest rank were consigned to the embraces of a barbarian husband. Valeria, the widow of Galerius and the daughter of Diocletian, was first insulted by proposals of marriage from Maximin, whose wife was still living, and then forced to wander through the Eastern provinces in the humblest disguise, till, at length, she perished at Thessalonica by the still more unjustifiable sentence of Licinius.

War with
Armenia.

The war of Maximin with Armenia was wantonly undertaken in a spirit of persecution. This earliest Christian kingdom was attached, in all the zeal of recent proselytism, to the new religion. That part which acknowledged the Roman sway was commanded to abandon Christianity, and the legions of Rome were employed in forcing the reluctant kingdom to obedience.¹

But these were foreign calamities. Throughout the

¹ Euseb. ix. 8.

dominions of Maximin, the summer rains did not fall; a sudden famine desolated the whole East; corn rose to an unprecedented price.¹

Famine.

Some large villages were entirely depopulated; many opulent families were reduced to beggary, and persons in a decent station sold their children as slaves. The rapacity of the emperor aggravated the general misery. The granaries of individuals were seized, and their stores closed up by the imperial seal. The flocks and herds were driven away, to be offered in unavailing sacrifices to the gods. The court of the emperor, in the mean time, insulted the general suffering by its excessive luxury; his foreign and barbarian troops lived in a kind of free quarters, in wasteful plenty, and plundered on all sides with perfect im-

Pestilence.

punity. The scanty and unwholesome food produced its usual effect, a pestilential malady. Carbuncles broke out all over the bodies of those who were seized with the disorder, but particularly attacked the eyes, so that multitudes became helplessly and incurably blind. The houses of the wealthy, which were secure against the famine, seemed particularly marked out by the pestilence. The hearts of all classes were hardened by the extent of the calamity. The most opulent, in despair of diminishing the vast mass of misery, or of relieving the swarms of beggars who filled every town and city, gave up the fruitless endeavor. The Christians alone took a nobler and evangelic revenge upon their suffering enemies. They were active in allaying those miseries of which they were the common victims. The ecclesiastical historian claims no exemption for the Christians from

¹ The statement in the text of Eusebius, as it stands, is utterly incredible, — a measure of wheat at 2,500 attics (drachms), from £70 to £80.

the general calamity, but honorably boasts that they alone displayed the offices of humanity and brotherhood. They were everywhere, tending the living, and burying the dead. They distributed bread; they visited the infected houses; they scared away the dogs which preyed, in open day, on the bodies in the streets, and rendered to those bodies the decent honors of burial. The myriads who perished, and were perishing, in a state of absolute desertion, could not but acknowledge that Christianity was stronger than love of kindred. The fears and the gratitude of mankind were equally awakened in their favor, — the fears which could not but conclude these calamities to be the vengeance of Heaven for the persecutions of its favored people; the gratitude to those who thus repaid good for evil in the midst of a hostile and exasperated society.¹

Before we turn our attention to the West, and follow the victorious career of Constantine to the reconsolidation of the empire in his person, and the triumph of Christianity through his favor, it may be more consistent with the distinct view of these proceedings to violate in some degree the order of time, and follow to its close the history of the Christian persecutions in the East.

Maximin took the alarm, and endeavored, too late, to retrace his steps. He issued an edict, in which he avowed the plain principles of toleration, and ascribed his departure from that salutary policy to the importunate zeal of his capital and of other cities, which he could not treat with disrespect, but which had demanded the expulsion of the Christians from their respective territories.

Maximin
retracts his
persecuting
edict.

¹ Euseb. ix. 9.

He commanded the suspension of all violent measures, and recommended only mild and persuasive means to win back these apostates to the religion of their forefathers. The Christians, who had once been deluded by a show of mercy, feared to reconstruct their fallen edifices, or to renew their public assemblies, and awaited, in trembling expectation, the issue of the approaching contest with Licinius.¹

The victory of Constantine over Maxentius had left him master of Rome. Constantine and Licinius reigned over all the European provinces; and the public edict for the toleration of Christianity, issued in the name of these two emperors, announced the policy of the Western Empire.

After the defeat of Maximin by Licinius, his obscure death gave ample scope for the credulous if not inventive malice of his enemies to ascribe to his last moments every excess of weakness and cruelty, as well as of suffering. He is said to have revenged his baffled hopes of victory on the Pagan priesthood, who had incited him to the war, by a promiscuous massacre of all within his power.

A. D. 313.
Death of
Maximin.

His last imperial act was the promulgation of another edict,² still more explicitly favorable to the Christians, in which he not merely proclaimed an unrestricted liberty of conscience, but restored the confiscated property of their churches. His bodily sufferings completed the dark catalogue of persecuting emperors who had perished under the most excruciating torments; his body was slowly consumed by an internal fire.³

¹ Euseb. viii. 14.

² Edict of toleration issued from Nicomedia, A.D. 313. 13th June.

³ Euseb. ix. 9.

With Maximin expired the last hope of Paganism to maintain itself by the authority of the Government. Though Licinius was only accidentally connected with the Christian party, and afterwards allied himself for a short time to the Pagan interest, at this junction his enemies were those of Christianity; and his cruel triumph annihilated at once the adherents of Maximin, and those of the old religion. The new hierarchy fell at once: the chief magistrates of almost all the cities were executed; for, even where they were not invested in the pontifical offices, it was under their authority that Paganism had renewed its more imposing form, and sank with them into the common ruin. The arts by which Theotecnus of Antioch, the chief adviser of Maximin, had imposed upon the populace of that city by mysterious wonders, were detected and exposed to public contempt, and the author put to death. Tyre, which had recommended itself to Maximin by the most violent hostility to the Christian name, was constrained to witness the reconstruction of the fallen church in far more than its original grandeur.

The new Paganism falls with Maximin.

Rebuilding of the church of Tyre.

Eusebius, afterwards the Bishop of Cæsarea and the historian of the Church, pronounced an inaugural discourse on its reconstruction. His description of the building is curious in itself, as the model of an Eastern church, and illustrates the power and opulence of the Christian party in a city which had taken the lead on the side of Paganism. Nor would the Christian orator venture greatly to exaggerate the splendor of a building which stood in the midst of, and provoked, as it were, a comparison with, temples of high antiquity and unquestioned magnificence.

The Christian church was built on the old site; for,

though a more convenient and imposing space might have been found, the piety of the Christians clung with reverence to a spot consecrated by the most holy associations; and their pride, perhaps, was gratified in restoring to more than its former grandeur the edifice which had been destroyed by Pagan malice. The whole site was environed with a wall; a lofty propylæon, which faced the rising sun, commanded the attention of the passing Pagan, who could not but contrast the present splendor with the recent solitude of the place; and afforded an imposing glimpse of the magnificence within. The intermediate space between the propylæon and the church was laid out in a cloister with four colonnades, enclosed with a palisade of wood. The centre square was open to the sun and air; and two fountains sparkled in the midst, and reminded the worshipper, with their emblematic purity, of the necessity of sanctification. The uninitiate proceeded no farther than the cloister, but might behold at this modest distance the mysteries of the sanctuary. Several other vestibules, or propylæa, intervened between the cloister and the main building. The three gates of the church fronted the East, of which the central was the loftiest and most costly, "like a queen between her attendants." It was adorned with plates of brass and richly sculptured reliefs. Two colonnades, or aisles, ran along the main building, above which were windows, which lighted the edifice; other buildings for the use of the ministers adjoined. Unfortunately, the pompous eloquence of Eusebius would not condescend to the vulgar details of measurements, and dwells only in vague terms of wonder at the spaciousness, the heaven-soaring loftiness, the splendor of the interior. The roof was of

beams from the cedars of Lebanon, the floor inlaid with marble. In the centre rose the altar, which had already obtained the name of the place of sacrifice; it was guarded from the approach of the profane by a trellis of the most slender and graceful workmanship. Lofty seats were prepared for the higher orders, and benches for those of lower rank were arranged with regularity throughout the building. Tyre, no doubt, did not stand alone in this splendid restoration of her Christian worship; and Christianity, even before her final triumph under Constantine, before the restitution of her endowments and the munificent imperial gifts, possessed sufficient wealth at least to commence these costly undertakings.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

Constantine.

THE reign of Constantine the Great forms one of the epochs in the history of the world. It is the era of the dissolution of the Roman empire ; Reign of Constantine. the commencement, or rather consolidation, of a kind of Eastern despotism, with a new capital, a new patriciate, a new constitution, a new financial system, a new, though as yet imperfect, jurisprudence, and, finally, a new religion. Already, in the time of Diocletian, Italy had sunk into a province ; Change in the empire. Rome, into *one* of the great cities of the empire. The declension of her importance had been gradual, but inevitable ; her supremacy had been shaken by that slow succession of changes which had imperceptibly raised the relative weight and dignity of other parts of the empire, and of the empire itself, as a whole, until she ceased to be the central point of the administration of public affairs. Rome was no longer the heart of the social system, from which Degradation of Rome. emanated all the life and power which animated and regulated the vast and unwieldy body, and to which flowed in the wealth and the homage of the obedient world. The admission of the whole empire to the rights of Roman citizenship by Caracalla had dissolved the commanding spell which centuries of

glory and conquest had attached to the majesty of the Roman name. To be a Roman was no longer a privilege; it gave no distinctive rights; its exemptions were either taken away, or vulgarized by being made common to all except the servile order. The secret once betrayed that the imperial dignity might be conferred elsewhere than in the imperial city, lowered still more the pre-eminence of Rome. From that time, the seat of government was at the head of the army. If the emperor, proclaimed in Syria, in Illyria, or in Britain, condescended, without much delay, to visit the ancient capital, the trembling senate had but to ratify the decree of the army, and the Roman people to welcome, with submissive acclamations, their new master.

Diocletian had consummated the degradation of Rome, by transferring the residence of the court to Nicomedia. He had commenced the work of reconstructing the empire upon a new basis. Some of his measures were vigorous, comprehensive, and tending to the strength and consolidation of the social edifice; but he had introduced a principle of disunion, more than powerful enough to counteract all the energy which he had infused into the executive government. His fatal policy of appointing co-ordinate sovereigns, two Augusti, with powers avowedly equal, and two Cæsars, with authority nominally subordinate, but which in able hands would not long have brooked inferiority, had nearly dismembered the solid unity of the empire. As yet, the influence of the

Unity of the
empire still
preserved.

Roman name was commanding and awful; the provinces were accustomed to consider themselves as parts of one political confederacy; the armies marched still under the same banners; were

united by discipline, and as yet by the unforgotten inheritance of victory from their all-subduing ancestors. In all parts of the world, every vestige of civil independence had long been effaced; centuries of servitude had destroyed every dangerous memorial of ancient dynasties or republican constitutions. Hence, therefore, the more moderate ambition of erecting an independent kingdom never occurred to any of the rival emperors; or, if the separation had been attempted, if a man of ability had endeavored to partition off one great province, dependent upon its own resources, defended by its own legions, or by a well-organized force of auxiliary barbarians, the age was not yet ripe for such a daring innovation. The whole empire would have resented the secession of any member from the ancient confederacy, and turned its concentrated force against the recreant apostate from the majestic unity of imperial Rome. Yet, if this system had long prevailed, the disorganizing must have finally triumphed over the associating principle: separate interests would have arisen; a gradual departure from the uniform order of administration must have taken place; a national character might have developed itself in different quarters; and the vast and harmonious edifice would have split asunder into distinct and insulated, and at length hostile, kingdoms.

Nothing less than a sovereign whose comprehensive mind could discern the exigencies of this critical period, nothing less than a conqueror who rested on the strength of successive victories over his competitors for the supremacy, could have re-united, and in time, under one vigorous administration, the dissolving elements of the empire.

Such a conqueror was Constantine; but, re-united, the empire imperiously demanded a complete civil re-organization. It was not the foundation of the new capital which wrought the change in the state of the empire: it was the state of the empire which required a new capital. The ancient system of government, emanating entirely from Rome, and preserving with sacred reverence the old republican forms, had lost its awe; the world acknowledged the master wherever it felt the power. The possession of Rome added no great weight to the candidate for empire, while its pretensions embarrassed the ruling sovereign.¹ The powerless senate, which still expected to ratify the imperial decrees; the patrician order, which had ceased to occupy the posts of honor and danger and distinction; the turbulent populace, and the prætorian soldiery, who still presumed to assert their superiority over the legions who were bravely contesting the German or the Persian frontier; the forms, the intrigues, the interests, the factions, of such a city,—would not be permitted by an emperor accustomed to rule with absolute dominion in Treves, in Milan, or in

Nicomedia, to clog the free movements of his
New nobility. administration. The dissolution of the prætorian bands by Constantine, on his victory over Maxentius, though necessary to the peace, was fatal to the power, of Rome. It cut off one of her great though dearly purchased distinctions. Around the Asiatic or the Illyrian or the Gaulish court had gradually arisen a new nobility, if not hitherto dis-

¹ Galerius (if we are to trust the hostile author of the *De Mort. Persecut.*) had never seen Rome before his invasion of Italy, and was unacquainted with its immense magnitude. Galerius, according to the same doubtful authority, threatened, after his flight from Italy, to change the name of the empire from Roman to Dacian. — c. xxvii.

tinguished by title, yet, by service or by favor, possessing the marked and acknowledged confidence of the emperor, and filling all offices of power and of dignity, — a nobility independent of patrician descent, or the tenure of property in Italy. Ability in the field or in the council, or even court intrigue, would triumph over the claims of hereditary descent; and all that remained was to decorate with title, and organize into a new aristocracy, those who already possessed the influence and the authority of rank. With emperors of provincial or barbarous descent naturally arose a race of military or civil servants, strangers to Roman blood and to the Roman name. The will of the sovereign became the fountain of honor. New regulations of finance, and a jurisprudence, though adhering closely to the forms and the practice of the old institutions, new in its spirit and in the scope of many of its provisions, embraced the whole empire in its comprehensive sphere. It was no longer Rome which legislated for the world, but the legislation which comprehended Rome among the cities subject to its authority. The laws were neither issued nor ratified, they were only submitted to, by Rome.

The Roman religion sank with the Roman supremacy. The new empire welcomed the new religion as its ally and associate in the gov-
State of the religion of Rome.
ernment of the human mind. The empire lent its countenance, its sanction, at length its power, to Christianity. Christianity infused throughout the empire a secret principle of association, which, long after it had dissolved into separate and conflicting masses, held together, nevertheless, the loose and crumbling confederacy, and, at length, itself assuming the lost or abdicated sovereignty, compressed the whole into

one system under a spiritual dominion. The papal, after some interval of confusion and disorganization, succeeded the imperial autocracy over the European world.

Motives for
the conver-
sion of Con-
stantine.

Of all historical problems, none has been discussed with a stronger bias of opinion, of passion, and of prejudice, according to the age, the nation, the creed, of the writer, than the conversion of Constantine, and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire. Hypocrisy, policy, superstition, divine inspiration, have been in turn assigned as the sole or the predominant influence which, operating on the mind of the emperor, decided at once the religious destiny of the empire. But there is nothing improbable in supposing, that Constantine was actuated by concurrent, or even conflicting, motives; all of which united in enforcing the triumph of Christianity. There is nothing contradictory in the combination of the motives themselves, particularly if we consider them as operating with greater strength, or with successive paroxysms, as it were, of influence, during the different periods in the life of Constantine, on the soldier, the statesman, and the man. The soldier, at a perilous crisis, might appeal, without just notions of his nature, to the tutelary power of a deity to whom a considerable part of his subjects, and perhaps of his army, looked up with faith or with awe. The statesman may have seen the absolute necessity of basing his new constitution on religion; he may have chosen Christianity as obviously possessing the strongest, and a still strengthening, hold upon the minds of his people. He might appreciate, with profound political sagacity, the moral influence of Christianity, as well as its tendency to enforce peaceful, if

not passive, obedience to civil government. At a later period, particularly if the circumstances of his life threw him more into connection with the Christian priesthood, he might gradually adopt as a religion that which had commanded his admiration as a political influence. He might embrace, with ardent attachment, yet, after all, by no means with distinct apprehension, or implicit obedience to all its ordinances, that faith which alone seemed to survive amid the wreck of all other religious systems.

A rapid but comprehensive survey of the state of Christianity at this momentous period will explain the position in which it stood in relation to the civil government, to the general population of the empire, and to the ancient religion ; and throw a clear and steady light upon the manner in which it obtained its political as well as its spiritual dominion over the Roman world.

The third century of Christianity had been prolific in religious revolutions. In the East, the silent progress of the Gospel had been suddenly arrested ; Christianity had been thrown back with irresistible violence on the Roman territory. An ancient religion, connected with the great political changes in the sovereignty of the Persian kingdom, revived in all the vigor and enthusiasm of a new creed : it was received as the associate and main support of the state. A hierarchy, numerous, powerful, and opulent, with all the union and stability of a hereditary caste, strengthened by large landed possessions, was re-invested with an authority almost co-ordinate with that of the sovereign. The restoration of Zoroastrianism, as the established and influential religion of Persia, is perhaps the only instance of the vigorous

Revival of
Zoroastrian-
ism.

revival of a Pagan religion.¹ Of the native religion of the Parthians, little, if any thing, is known. They were a Scythian race, who overran and formed a ruling aristocracy over the remains of the older Persian and the more modern Grecian civilization. The Scythian or Tartar or Turcoman tribes, who have perpetually, from China westward, invaded and subdued the more polished nations, have never attempted to force their rude and shapeless deities, their more vulgar Shamanism, or even the Buddhism which in its simpler form has prevailed among them to a great extent, on the nations over which they have ruled. The ancient Magian priesthood remained, if with diminished power, in great numbers, and not without extensive possessions in the eastern provinces of the Parthian empire. The temples raised by the Greek successors of Alexander, whether to Grecian deities, or blended with the Tsabaism or the Nature-worship of Babylonia or Syria, continued to possess their undiminished honors, with their ample endowments and their sacerdotal colleges. Some vestiges of the deification of the kings of the line of Arsaces seem to be discerned, but with doubtful certainty.

The earliest legendary history of Christianity assigns Parthia as the scene of apostolic labors: it was the province of St. Thomas. But in the intermediate region, the great Babylonian province, there is the strongest evidence that Christianity had made an

¹ The materials for this view of the restoration of the Persian religion are chiefly derived from the following sources: Hyde, *De Religione Persarum*; Anquetil du Perron; *Zendavesta*, 3 vols.; the German translation of Du Perron, by Kleuker, with very valuable volumes of appendix (*Anhang*); De Guigniaut's Translation of Creuzer's *Symbolik*; Malcolm's *History of Persia*; Heeren, *Ideen*.

Some of these sources were not open to Gibbon when he composed his brilliant chapter on this subject.

early, a rapid, and a successful progress. It was the residence, at least for a certain period, of the apostle St. Peter.¹ With what success it conducted its contest with Judaism, it is impossible to conjecture; for Judaism, which, after the second rebellion in the reign of Hadrian, maintained but a permissive and precarious existence in Palestine, flourished in the Babylonian province with something of a national and independent character. The Resch-Glutha, or Prince of the Captivity, far surpassed in the splendor of his court the Patriarch of Tiberias; and the activity of their schools of learning in Nahardea, in Sura, and in Pumbeditha, is attested by the vast compilation of the Babylonian Talmud.² Nor does the Christianity of this region appear to have suffered from the persecuting spirit of the Magian hierarchy during the earlier conflicts for the Mesopotamian provinces between the arms of Rome and Persia. Though one bishop ruled the united communities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, the numbers of Christians in the rest of the province were probably far from inconsiderable.

It was in the ancient dominions of Darius and of Xerxes that the old religion of Zoroaster re-assumed its power and authority. No sooner had Ardeschir Babhegan (the Artaxerxes of the Greeks) destroyed the last remains of the foreign Parthian dynasty, and re-organized the dominion of the native Persian kings, from the borders of Charismia to the Tigris (the Persian writers assert to the Euphrates),³ than he hastened to environ his throne with the Magian hierarchy, and to re-establish the sacerdotal order in all its former dig-

Restoration
of Persian
monarchy
by Ardeschir
Babhegan.

Of the reli-
gion of Zo-
roaster.

¹ Compare note to vol. i. p. 72. ² See Hist. of the Jews, ii. 485, &c.

³ Malcolm's History of Persia, i. 72.

nity. But an ancient religion, which has sunk into obscurity, will not regain its full influence over the popular mind, unless re-invested with divine authority: intercourse with heaven must be renewed; the sanction and ratification of the deity must be public and acknowledged. Wonder and miracle are as necessary to the revival of an old, as to the establishment of a new religion. In the records of the Zoroastrian faith, which are preserved in the ancient language of the Zend, may be traced many singular provisions which bear the mark of great antiquity, and show the transition from a pastoral to an agricultural life.¹ The cultivation of the soil; the propagation of fruit-trees, nowhere so luxuriant and various as in the districts which probably gave birth to the great religious legislator of the East, Balk, and the country of the modern Afghans; and the destruction of noxious animals,—are among the primary obligations enforced on the followers of Zoroaster. A grateful people might look back with the deepest veneration on the author of a religious code so wisely beneficent; the tenth of the produce would be no disproportionate offering to the priesthood of a religion which had thus turned civilization into a duty, and given a divine sanction to the first principles of human wealth and happiness. But a new impulse was necessary to a people which had long passed this state of transition, and were only re-assuming the possessions of their ancestors, and reconstructing their famous monarchy. Zoroastrianism, like all other religions, had split into numerous sects; and an authoritative exposition of the Living Word of Zoroaster could alone restore its power and

¹ Compare Heeren, Ideen, and Rhode, *Die Heilige Sage des Zendvolks* But see throughout the work of Dr. Haug, cited in Chap. I.

its harmony to the re-established Magianism of the realm of Ardeschir. Erdiviraph was the Magian, designated, by his blameless innocence from his mother's womb, to renew the intercourse with the Divinity, and to unfold, on the authority of inspiration, the secrets of heaven and hell. Forty (according to one account, eighty thousand) of the Magian priesthood, the Archimage, who resided in Bactria, the Desters and the Mobeds, had assembled to witness and sanction the important ceremony. They were successively reduced to 40,000, to 4,000, to 400, to 40, to 7: the acknowledged merit of Erdiviraph gave him the pre-eminence among the seven.¹ Having passed through the strictest ablutions, and drunk a powerful opiate, he was covered with a white linen, and laid to sleep. Watched by seven of the nobles, including the king, he slept for seven days and nights; and, on his re-awakening, the whole nation listened with believing wonder to his exposition of the faith of Oromazd, which was carefully written down by an attendant scribe, for the benefit of posterity.²

A hierarchy which suddenly regains its power after centuries of obscurity, perhaps of oppression, will not be scrupulous as to the means of giving strength and permanence to its dominion. With Ardeschir, the restoration of the Persian people to their rank among the nations of the earth, by the re-infusion of a national spirit, was the noble object of ambition; the re-establishment of

¹ All these numbers, it should be observed, are multiples of 40, the indefinite number throughout the East. (See Bredow's Dissertation, annexed to the new edition of Syncellus; Byzant, Hist. Bonn.) The recusants of Zoroastrianism (*vid. infra*) are in like manner reduced to seven, the sacred number with the Zoroastrian, as with the religion of the Old Testament

² Hyde (from Persian authorities), *De Relig. Pers.* p. 278, *et seqq.*

a national religion, as the strongest and most enduring bond of union, was an essential part of his great scheme: but a national religion, thus associated with the civil polity, is necessarily exclusive, and impatient of the rivalry of other creeds. Intolerance lies in the very nature of a religion which, dividing the whole world into the realm of two conflicting principles, raises one part of mankind into a privileged order, as followers of the Good principle, and condemns the other half as the irreclaimable slaves of the Evil One. The national worship is identified with that of Oromazd; and the kingdom of Oromazd must be purified from the intrusion of the followers of Ahriman. The foreign relations, so to speak, of the Persian monarchy, according to their old poetical history, are strongly colored by their deep-rooted religious opinions. Their implacable enemies, the pastoral Tartar or Turcoman tribes, inhabit the realm of darkness, and at times invade and desolate the kingdom of light, till some mighty monarch, Kaiomers, or some redoubtable hero, Rustan, re-asserts his majesty, and revenges the losses, of the kingdom of Oromazd. Iran and Turan are the representatives of the two conflicting worlds of light and darkness. In the same spirit, to expel, to persecute, the followers of other religions, was to expel, to trample on, the followers of Ahriman. This edict of Ardeschir closed all the temples but those of the fire-worshippers: only eighty thousand followers of Ahri-man, including the worshippers of foreign religions and the less orthodox believers in Zoroastrianism, remained to infect the purified region of Oromazd.¹ Of the loss

¹ Gibbon, in his chapter on the restoration of the Persian monarchy and religion, has said that in this conflict "the sword of Aristotle (such was the name given by the Orientals to the Polytheism and philosophy of the Greeks) was easily broken." I suspect this expression to be an anachronism; it is

sustained by Christianity during this conflict, in the proper dominions of Persia, and the number of churches which shared the fate of the Parthian and Grecian temples, there is no record. The persecutions by the followers of Zoroaster are to be traced, at a later period, only in Armenia and in the Babylonian province; but Persia, from this time until the fiercer persecutions of their own brethren forced the Nestorian Christians to overleap every obstacle, presented a stern and insuperable barrier to the progress of Christianity.¹ It cut off all connection with the Christian communities (if communities there were) in the remoter East.²

Ardeschir bequeathed to his royal descendants the solemn charge of maintaining the indissoluble union of the Magian religion with the state: "Never forget that, as a king, you are at once the protector of religion and of your country. Consider the altar and the throne as inseparable: they must always sustain each other. A sovereign without religion is a tyrant; and a people who have none, may be deemed the most monstrous of societies. Religion may exist without a state, but a state cannot exist without religion: it is by holy laws that a political association can alone be bound. You should be to

Destruction
of Christian-
ity in Persia.

Connection
of the throne
and the
hierarchy.

clearly post-Mohammedan and from a Mohammedan author. Gibbon has likewise quoted authorities for the persecution of Artaxerxes which relate to those of his descendants.

¹ Sozomen, indeed, asserts that Christianity was first introduced into the Persian dominions at a later period, from their intercourse with Osroene and Armenia. But it is very improbable that the active zeal of the Christians in the first ages of the religion should not have taken advantage of the mild and tolerant government of the Parthian kings. "Parthians and Elamites," i.e. Jews inhabiting those countries, are mentioned as among the converts on the day of Pentecost. — Sozomen, ii. 8.

² The date of the earliest Christian communities in India is judiciously discussed in Bohlen, *Das alte Indien*, i. 369 to the end.

your people an example of piety and virtue, but without pride or ostentation.”¹ The kings of the race of Sassan accepted and fulfilled the sacred trust; the Magian hierarchy encircled and supported the kingly power of Persia. They formed the great council of the state. Foreign religions, if tolerated, were watched with jealous severity. Magianism was established at the point of the sword in those parts of Armenia which were subjugated by the Persian kings. When Mesopotamia was included within the pale of the Persian dominions, the Jews were at times exposed to the severest oppressions; the burial of the dead was peculiarly offensive to the usages of the fire-worshippers. Mani was alike rejected and persecuted by the Christian and the Magian priesthood; and the barbarous execution of the Christian bishops, who ruled over the Babylonian sees, demanded at a later period the interference of Constantine.²

But, while Persia thus fiercely repelled Christianity from its frontier, upon that frontier arose a Armenia the first Christian kingdom. Christian state.³ Armenia was the first country which embraced Christianity as the religion of the king, the nobles, and the people. During the early ages of the empire, Armenia had been an object of open contention or of political intrigue between the conflicting powers of Parthia and Rome. The adoption of Christianity as the religion of the state, while it united the interests of the kingdom, by a closer bond, with the Christian empire of Rome (for it anticipated

¹ Malcolm's Hist. of Persia, i. 74, from Ferdusi.

² Sozomen, ii. 9, 10. Compare, on these persecutions of the Christians, Kleuker, Anhang zum Zendavesta, p. 292 *et seq.*, with Assemani, *Act. Martyr. Or. et Occid. Romæ*, 1748.

³ St. Martin, *Mémoires sur l'Arménie*, i. 405, 406, &c. Notes to Le Beau, *Hist. des Empereurs*, i. 76.

the honor of being the first Christian state by only a few years), added, to its perilous situation on the borders of the two empires, a new cause for the implacable hostility of Persia. Every successful invasion, and every subtle negotiation to establish the Persian predominance in Armenia, was marked by the most relentless and sanguinary persecutions, which were endured with the combined dignity of Christian and patriotic heroism by the afflicted people. The Vartobed, or Patriarch, was always the first victim of Persian conquest, the first leader to raise the fallen standard of independence.

The Armenian histories, written, almost without exception, by the priesthood, in order to do honor to their native country by its early reception of Christianity, have included the Syrian kingdom of Edessa within its borders, and assigned a place to the celebrated Abgar in the line of their kings. The personal correspondence of Abgar with the Divine Author of Christianity is, of course, incorporated in this early legend. But though, no doubt, Christianity had made considerable progress, at the commencement of the third century, the government of Armenia was still sternly and irreconcilably Pagan. Khosrov I. imitated the cruel and impious Pharaoh. He compelled the Christians, for a scanty stipend, to labor on the public works. Many obtained the glorious crown of martyrdom.¹

A.D. 214

Gregory the Illuminator was the Apostle of Armenia. The birth of Gregory was darkly connected with the murder of the reigning king, the almost total extirpation of the royal race, and the subjugation of his country to a foreign yoke. He was

Gregory the
Illuminator

¹ Father Chamich, *History of Armenia*, i. 153 translated by Aydall.

the son of Anah, the assassin of his sovereign. The murder of Khosrov, the valiant and powerful King of Armenia, is attributed to the jealous ambition of Ardeschir, the first King of Persia.¹ Anah, of a noble Armenian race, was bribed, by the promise of vast wealth and the second place in the empire, to conspire against the life of Khosrov. Pretending to take refuge in the Armenian dominions from the persecution of King Ardeschir, he was hospitably received in the city of Valarshapat. He struck the king to the heart, and fled. The Armenian soldiery, in their fury, pursued the assassin, who was drowned, during his flight, in the river Araxes. The vengeance of the soldiers wreaked itself upon his innocent family:² the infant Gregory alone was saved by a Christian nurse, who took refuge in Cæsarea. There the future apostle was baptized, and (thus runs the legend) by divine revelation received the name of Gregory. Ardeschir reaped all the advantage of the treachery of Anah, and Armenia sank into a Persian province. The conqueror consummated the crime of his base instrument; the whole family of Khosrov was put to death, except Tiridates, who fled to the Roman dominions, and one sister, Khosrovedught, who was afterwards instrumental in the introduction of Christianity into the kingdom. Tiridates served with distinction in the Roman armies of Diocletian, and seized the favorable opportunity of reconquering his hereditary throne. The re-establishment of Armenia as a friendly power was an important event in the Eastern policy of Rome; the simultaneous

¹ Moses Choren. 64, 71; Chamich, *Hist. Armén.* i. 154, and other authorities. St. Martin, *Mémoires sur l'Arménie*, i. 303, &c.

² According to St. Martin, two children of Anah were saved.

conversion of the empire and its Eastern ally to the new religion strengthened the bonds of union by a common religious interest.

Gregory re-entered his native country in the train of the victorious Tiridates. But Tiridates ^{Tiridates, King of Armenia.} was a bigoted adherent to the ancient religion of his country. This religion appears to have been a mingled form of corrupt Zoroastrianism and Grecian, or rather Oriental, Nature-worship, with some rites of Scythian origin. Their chief deity was Aramazd, the Ormuzd of the Magian system; but their temples were crowded with statues, and their altars reeked with animal sacrifices,—usages revolting to the purer Magianism of Persia.¹ The Babylonian impersonation of the female principle of generation, Anaitis or Anahid, was one of their most celebrated divinities; and at the funeral of their great King Artaces many persons had immolated themselves, after the Scythian or Getic custom, upon his body.

It was in the temple of Anaitis, in the province of Ekelias, that Tiridates offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving for his restoration to his hereditary throne. He commanded Gregory to assist in the idolatrous worship. The Christian resolutely refused, ^{Persecution of Gregory.} and endured, according to the Armenian history, twelve different kinds of torture. It was disclosed to the exasperated monarch, that the apostate from the national religion was son to the assassin of his father. Gregory was plunged into a deep dungeon, where he languished for fourteen years, supported by the faithful charity of a Christian female. At the close of the fourteen years, a pestilence, attributed by the Christian party to the divine vengeance,

¹ Chamich, i. 145

wasted the kingdom of Armenia. The virgin sister of Tiridates, Khosrovedught (the daughter of Khosrov), had embraced the faith of the Gospel. By divine revelation (thus speaks the piety of the priestly historians), she advised the immediate release of Gregory. What Heaven had commanded, Heaven had approved by wonders. The king himself, afflicted by the malady, was healed by the Christian missionary.

Conversion of the king. The pestilence ceased. The king, the nobles, the people, almost simultaneously submitted to baptism. Armenia became at once a Christian kingdom. Gregory took the highest rank, as archbishop of the kingdom. Priests were invited from Greece and Syria; four hundred bishops were consecrated; churches and religious houses arose in every quarter; the Christian festivals and days of religious observance were established by law.

But the severe truth of history must make the melancholy acknowledgment that the Gospel did not finally triumph without a fierce and sanguinary strife. The province of Dara, the sacred region of the Armenians, crowded with their national temples, made a stern and determined resistance. The priests fought for their altars with desperate courage, and it was only with the sword that churches could be planted in that irreclaimable district.¹ In the war waged by Maximin against Tiridates, in which the ultimate aim of the Roman emperor, according to

Persecution by the Christians.

¹ In the very curious extract from the contemporary Armenian historian Zenob, there is an account of this civil war. The following inscription commemorated the decisive battle:—

The first battle in which men bravely fought.

The leader of the armies was Argan, the chief of the Priesthood,
Who lies here in his grave, and with him 1038 men.

And this battle we fought for the Godhead of Kisáne and for Christ.

See *Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, vol. i. 253, 378, *et seqq.*

Eusebius, was the suppression of Christianity, he may have been invited and encouraged by the rebellious Paganism of the subjects of Tiridates.

Towards the close of the third century, while the religion of the East was undergoing these signal revolutions, and the antagonistic creeds Manicheism. of Magianism and Christianity were growing up into powerful and hostile systems, and assuming an important influence on the political affairs of Asia; while the East and the West thus began that strife of centuries which subsequently continued in a more fierce and implacable form in the conflict between Christianity and Mohammedanism,—a bold and ambitious adventurer in the career of religious Mani. change¹ attempted to unite the conflicting elements; to reconcile the hostile genius of the East and of the West; to fuse together, in one comprehensive scheme, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and apparently the Buddhism of India. It is singular to trace the doctrines of the most opposite systems and of remote regions assembled together and harmonized in the vast eclecticism of Mani.² From his native Persia he derived his Dualism, his antagonistic worlds Various sources of his doctrines. of light and darkness; and from Magianism,

¹ Besides the original authorities, I have consulted, for Mani and his doctrines, Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*; D'Herbelot, art. "Mani;" Lardner, *Credibility of Gospel History*; Mosheim, *De Reb. Christ. ante Const. Magnum*; Matter, *Hist. du Gnosticisme*, ii. 351. I had only seen Baur's able *Manichäische Religious system* after this chapter was written. I had anticipated, though not followed out so closely, the relationship to Buddhism, much of which, however, is evidently the common groundwork of all Orientalism.

² Augustine, in various passages, but most fully in what is given as an extract from the book of the Foundation, *De Nat. Boni*, p. 515. Compare Beausobre, vol. ii. 386, who seems to consider it an abstract from some forged or spurious work. Probably much of Mani's system was allegorical; but how much, his disciples probably did not, and his adversaries would not, know.

likewise, his contempt of outward temple and splendid ceremonial. From Gnosticism, or rather from universal Orientalism, he drew the inseparable admixture of physical and moral notions, the eternal hostility between Mind and Matter, the rejection of Judaism, and the identification of the God of the Old Testament with the Evil Spirit, the distinction between Jesus and the Christ, with the Docetism, or the unreal death of the incorporeal Christ. From Cabalism, through Gnosticism, came the primal man, the Adam Cædmon of that system, and (if it be a genuine part of this system) the assumption of beautiful human forms, those of graceful boys and attractive virgins, by the powers of light, and their union with the male and female spirits of darkness. From India he took the Emanation theory (all light was a part of the Deity, and in one sense the soul of the world), the metempsychosis, the triple division of human souls (the one the pure, which re-ascended at once, and was re-united to the primal light; the second the semi-pure, which, having passed through a purgatorial process, returned to earth, to pass through a second ordeal of life; the third, of obstinate and irreclaimable evil): from India, perhaps, came his Homophorus, as the Greeks called it, his Atlas, who supported the earth upon his shoulders, and his Splenditenens, the circumambient air. From Chaldea he borrowed the power of astral influences; and he approximated to the solar worship of expiring Paganism: Christ, the Mediator, like the

See also the most curious passage about the Manichean metempsychosis, in the statement of Tyrbo, in the *Disputatio Archelai et Manetis*, apud Routh *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, vol. iv.

The most singular fact is that these obstinate idolaters were of Indian descent, and were distinguished by long hair.

Mithra of his countryman, had his dwelling in the sun.¹

From his native country Mani derived the simple diet of fruits and herbs; from the Buddhism of India, his respect for animal life, which was to be slain neither for food nor for sacrifice;² from all the anti-materialist sects or religions, the abhorrence of every sensual indulgence, even the bath as well as the banquet; the proscription, or, at least, the disparagement of marriage. And the whole of these foreign and extraneous tenets, his creative imagination blended with his own form of Christianity; for so completely are they mingled, that it is difficult to decide whether Christianity or Magianism formed the groundwork of Mani's system. From Christianity he derived not, perhaps, a strictly Nicene, but more than an Arian, Trinity. His own system was the completion of the imperfect revelation of the Gospel. He was a *man* invested with a divine mission,—the Paraclete (for Mani appears to have distinguished between the Paraclete and the Holy Spirit), who was to consummate the great work auspiciously commenced, yet unfulfilled, by the mission of Jesus.³ Mani had twelve apostles.

¹ D'Herbelot, voc. "Mani."

² Ibid. Augustine says that they wept when they plucked vegetables for food; for in them also there was a certain portion of life, which, according to Mani, was a part of the Deity. "Dicitis enim dolorem sentire fructum, cum de arbore carpitur, sentire dum conciditur, cum teritur, cum coquitur, cum manditur. Cujus, porro dementiæ est, pios se videri velle, quod ab animalium interfectione se temperent, cum omnes suas escas easdem animas habere dicunt, quibus ut putant, viventibus, tanta vulnera et manibus et dentibus ingerant."—Augustin. contra Faust., lib. vi. p. 205, 206. This is pure Buddhism.

³ Lardner, following Beausobre, considers the account of Mani's predecessors, Scythianus and Terebinthus, or Buddha, idle fictions. The virgin birth assigned to Buddha, which appears to harmonize with the great Indian Mythos of the origin of Buddhism, might warrant a conjecture that this is an Oriental tradition of the Indian origin of some of Mani's doctrines, dictated

His Ertang, or Gospel, was intended to supersede the four Christian Evangelists, whose works, though valuable, he averred had been interpolated with many Jewish fables. The Acts, Mani altogether rejected, as announcing the descent of the Paraclete on the apostles.¹ On the writings of St. Paul he pronounced a more favorable sentence. But his Ertang, it is said, was not merely the work of a prophet, but of a painter; for, among his various accomplishments,

His paint-
ings.

Mani excelled in that art. It was richly illustrated by pictures, which commanded the wonder of the age; while his followers, in devout admiration, studied the tenets of their master in the splendid images, as well as in the sublime language, of the Marvellous Book. If this be true; since the speculative character of Mani's chief tenets, their theogonical, if it may be so said, extramundane character, lay beyond the proper province of the painter (the imitation of existing beings, and that idealism which, though elevating its objects to an unreal dignity or beauty, is nevertheless faithful to the truth of nature), — this imagery, with which his book was illuminated, was probably a rich system of Oriental symbolism, which may have been transmuted by the blind zeal of his followers or the misapprehension of his adversaries, into some of his more fanciful tenets. The religion of Persia was fertile in these emblematic figures, if not their native source; and in the gorgeous illuminated manuscripts of the East, often full of allegorical devices, we may discover, perhaps, the antitypes of the Ertang of Mani.²

by Greek ignorance. I now find this conjecture followed out and illustrated with copious learning by Baur.

¹ Lardner (v. 11, 183) suggests other reasons for the rejection of the Acts.

² It appears, I think, from Augustine, that all the splendid images of the

Mani (I blend together and harmonize as far as possible the conflicting accounts of the Greeks and Asiatics) was of Persian birth,¹ of the sacred race of the Magi. He wore the dress of a Persian of distinction, the lofty Babylonian sandals, the mantle of azure blue, the parti-colored trousers; and he bore the ebony staff in his hand.² He was a proficient in the learning of his age and country, a mathematician, and had made a globe; he was deeply skilled, as appears from his system, in the theogonical mysteries of the East, and so well versed in the Christian Scriptures that he was said to have been, and indeed he may at one time have been, a Christian priest, in the province of Ahoriaz that bordered on Babylonia.³ He began to propagate his doctrines during the reign of Shah-poor; but the son of Ardeschir would endure no invasion upon the established Magianism.⁴ Mani fled from the wrath of his sovereign into Turkestan; from thence he is said to have visited India, and even China.⁵ In Turkestan he withdrew himself from the society of men, like

sceptred king crowned with flowers, the Splenditenens and the Homophorus, were allegorically interpreted. "*Si non sunt ænigmata rationis, phantasmata sunt cogitationis, aut vecordia furoris. Si vero ænigmata esse dicuntur.*" — *Contra Faust.* xv. p. 277. The extract from the "amatory song" (*Contra Faust.* xv. 5), with the twelve ages (the great cycle of twelve thousand years) singing and casting flowers upon the everlasting sceptred king, the twelve gods (the signs of the zodiac), and the hosts of angels, is evidently the poetry, not the theology, of the system.

¹ His birth is assigned by the Chronicle of Edessa to the year 289. — Beausobre, i.

² Beausobre, who is inclined to admit the genuineness of this description, in the Acts of Archelaus, has taken pains to show that there was nothing differing from the ordinary Persian dress. — Vol. i. p. 97, &c.

³ In the Acts of Archelaus, he is called a barbarous Persian, who understood no Greek, but disputed in Syriac. — c. 36.

⁴ Malcolm, i. 79.

⁵ Abulpharag, *Dynast.* p. 82. See Lardner, p. 167.

Mohammed in the cave of Hira,¹ into a grotto, through which flowed a fountain of water, and in which provision for a year had been secretly stored. His followers believed that he had ascended into heaven, to commune with the Deity. At the end of the year, he re-appeared, and displayed his Ertang, embellished with its paintings, as the divine revelation.²

In the theory of Mani, the one Supreme, who hovered in inaccessible and uninfluential distance over the whole of the Gnostic systems, the Brahm of the Indians, and the more vague and abstract Zeruane Akerene of Zoroastrianism, holds no place. The groundwork of his system is an original and irreconcilable Dualism.³ The two antagonistic worlds of light and darkness, of spirit and matter, existed from eternity, separate, unmingled, unapproaching, ignorant of each other's existence.⁴ The kingdom of light was

¹ Lardner considers this story of the cave a later invention borrowed from Mohammed. The relation of this circumstance by Mohammedan authors leads me to the opposite conclusion. They would rather have avoided than invented points of similitude between their prophet and "the impious Sadderucee," as he is called in the Koran. But see Baur's very ingenious and probable theory, which resolves it into a myth, and connects it with the Mithraic and still earlier astronomical or religious legends.

² Beausobre (i. 191, 192) would find the Cascar at which, according to the extant but much-contested report, the memorable conference between Archelaus and Mani was held, at Cashgar in Turkestan. But, independent of the improbability of a Christian bishop settled in Turkestan, the whole history is full of difficulties, and nothing is less likely than that the report of such a conference should reach the Greek or Syrian Christians through the hostile territory of Persia.

³ Epiphanius gives these words as the commencement of Mani's work (in twenty-two books) on the Mysteries: 'Ἦν Θεὸς καὶ ἔλη, φῶς καὶ σκότος, ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακόν, τοῖς πᾶσιν ἄκρως ἐναντία, ὡς κατὰ μηδὲν ἐπικοινωνοῦν θάτερον θατέρῳ. — Epiphanius, *Hærat*. lxvi. 14.

⁴ "Hæ quidem in exordio fuerunt duæ substantiæ a sese diversæ. Et luminis quidem imperium tenebat Deus Pater, in suâ sanctâ stirpe perpetuus, in virtute magnificus, naturâ ipsâ verus, æternitate propriâ semper exsultans,

held by God the Father, who "rejoiced in his own proper eternity, and comprehended in himself wisdom and vitality:" his most glorious kingdom was founded in a light and blessed region, which could not be moved nor shaken. On one side of his most illustrious and holy territory was the land of darkness, of vast depth and extent, inhabited by fiery bodies, and pestiferous races of beings.¹ Civil dissensions agitated the world of darkness; the defeated faction fled to the heights or to the extreme verge of their world.² They beheld with amazement and with envy the beautiful and peaceful regions of light.³ They determined to invade the delightful realm; and the primal man, the archetypal Adam, was formed to defend the borders against this irruption of the hostile powers. He was armed with his five elements, opposed to those which formed the realm of darkness. The primal man was in danger of discomfiture in the long and fearful strife, had not Oromazd, the great power of the world of light, sent the living spirit to his assist-

continens apud se sapientiam et sensus vitales. . . . Ita autem fundata sunt ejusdem splendidissima regna super lucidam et beatam terram, ut a nullo unquam aut moveri aut concuti possint." — *Apud August. contra Ep. Manich. c. 13, n. 16.*

¹ The realm of darkness was divided into five distinct circles, which may remind us of Dante's hell: 1. Of infinite darkness, perpetually emanating, and of inconceivable stench. 2. Beyond these, that of muddy and turbid waters, with their inhabitants; and, 3. within, that of fierce and boisterous winds, with their prince and their parents. 4. A fiery but corruptible region (the region of destroying fire), with its leaders and nations. 5. In like manner, further within, a place full of smoke and thick gloom, in which dwelt the dreadful sovereign of the whole, with innumerable princes around him, of whom he was the soul and the source. — *Ep. Fundament. ap. Augustin. cont. Manich. c. 14, n. 19.*

² The world of darkness, according to one statement, cleft the world of light like a wedge (*Augustin. contr. Faust. iv. 2*; according to another (*Titus Bostrensis, i. 7*), it occupied the southern quarter of the universe. This, as Baur observes, is Zoroastrianism. — *Bundehesch, part iii. p. 62.*

³ *Theodoret, Hæret. Fab. i. 26.*

ance.¹ The powers of darkness retreated; but they bore away some particles of the divine light, and the extrication of these particles (portions of the Deity, according to the subtle materialism of the system) is the object of the long and almost interminable strife of the two principles. Thus, part of the Divinity was interfused through the whole of matter; light was, throughout all visible existence, commingled with darkness.² Mankind was the creation or the offspring of the great principle of darkness, after this stolen and ethereal light had become incorporated with his dark and material being. Man was formed in the image of the primal Adam; his nature was threefold, or perhaps dualistic; the body, the concupiscent or sensual soul (which may have been the influence of the body on the soul), and the pure, celestial, and intellectual spirit. Eve was of inferior, of darker, and more material origin; for the creating Archon, or spirit of evil, had expended all the light, or soul, upon man. Her beauty was the fatal tree of Paradise, for which Adam was content to fall. It was by this union that the sensual or concupiscent soul triumphed over the pure and divine spirit;³ and it was by marriage, by sexual union, that the darkening race was propa-

¹ Epiphan., *Hæret.* lxvi. 76. Titus Bostrensis, *Augustin. de Hæret.* c. 46.

² The celestial powers, during the long process of commixture, assumed alternately the most beautiful forms of the masculine and feminine sex, and mingled with the powers of darkness, who likewise became boys and virgins; and from their conjunction proceeded the still-commingling world. This is probably an allegory, perhaps a painting. There is another fanciful poetic image of considerable beauty, and, possibly, of the same allegoric character. The pure elementary spirits soared upwards in "their ships of light," in which they originally sailed through the stainless element; those which were of a hotter nature were dragged down to earth; those of a colder and more humid temperament were exhaled upwards to the elemental waters. The ships of light are, in another view, the celestial bodies.

³ *De Mor. Manichæor.* c. 19. *Acta Archelai,* c. 10.

gated. The intermediate, the visible world, which became the habitation of man, was the creation of the principle of good, by his spirit. This primal principle subsisted in trinal unity (whether from eternity might perhaps have been as fiercely agitated in the Manichean as in the Christian schools); the Christ, the first efflux of the God of Light, would have been defined by the Manichean as in the Nicene Creed, as Light of Light; he was self-subsistent, endowed with all the perfect attributes of the Deity, and his dwelling was in the sun.¹ He was the Mithra of the Persian system; and the Manichean doctrine was Zoroastrianism under Christian appellations.² There is an evident difference between the Jesus and the Christos throughout the system; the Jesus Patibilis seems to be the imprisoned and suffering light.

The spirit, which made up the triple being of the primal principle of good, was an all-pervading ether, the source of life and being; which, continually stimulating the disseminated particles of light, was the animating principle of the worlds. He was the creator of the intermediate world, the scene of strife, in which the powers of light and darkness contested the dominion over man; the one assisting the triumph of the

¹ According to the creed of Faustus, his *virtue* dwelt in the sun, his *wisdom* in the moon. — Apud August. lib. xxx. p. 333.

² The Manicheans were Trinitarians, or at least used Trinitarian language — Augustin. contra Faust. c. xx. “Nos Patris quidem Dei omnipotentis, et Christi filii ejus, et Spiritus Sancti unum idemque sub triplici appellatione colimus numen; sed Patrem quidem ipsum lucem incolere summam ac principalem, quam Paulus alias inaccessibilem vocat; Filium vero in hac secunda ac visibili luce consistere, qui quoniam sit et ipse geminus, ut eum Apostolus novit, Christum dicens esse Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam, virtutem quidem ejus in sole habitare credimus, sapientiam vero in luna: necnon et Spiritus Sancti, qui est majestas tertia, aëris hunc omnem ambitum sedem fatemur ac diversorium, cujus ex viribus ac spiritali profusione terram quoque concipientem, gignere patibilem Jesum, qui est vita et salus hominum, qui suspensus ex ligno.”

particle of light which formed the intellectual spirit, the other embruting and darkening the imprisoned light with the corruption and sensual pollutions of matter. But the powers of darkness obtained the mastery, and man was rapidly degenerating into the baser destiny; the Homophorus, the Atlas on whose shoulders the earth rests, began to tremble and totter under his increasing burden.¹ Then the Christ descended from his dwelling in the sun; assumed a form *apparently* human; the Jews, incited by the Prince of Darkness, crucified his phantom form; but He left behind his Gospel, which dimly and imperfectly taught what was now revealed in all its full effulgence by Mani the Persian.

The celestial bodies, which had been formed by the living spirit of the purer element, were the witnesses and co-operators in the great strife.² To the sun, the dwelling of the Christ, were drawn up the purified souls, in which the principle of light had prevailed, and passed onward for ablution in the pure water,

¹ Homophorus and his ally, the Splenditenens, who assists him in maintaining the earth in its equilibrium, is one of the most incongruous and least necessary parts of the Manichean system.

Is the origin of these images the notion of supporters of the earth which are so common in the East? Are any of these fables older than the introduction of Manicheism? Is it the old Indian fable under another form? or is it the Greek Atlas? I am inclined to look to India for the origin.

Bausobre's objection, that such a fiction is inconsistent with Mani's mathematical knowledge, and his formation of a globe, is of no inconsiderable weight, if it is not mere poetry.

² Lardner has well expressed the Manichean notion of the formation of the celestial bodies, which were made, the sun of the *good* fire, the moon of the *good* water. "In a word, not to be too minute, the Creator formed the sun and moon out of those parts of the light which had preserved their original purity. The visible or inferior heavens (for now we do not speak of the supreme heaven) and the rest of the planets were formed of those parts of light which were but little corrupted with matter. The rest he left in our world, which are no other than those parts of light which had suffered most by the contagion of matter." — Lardner's Works, 4to ed., ii. 193.

which forms the moon; and then, after fifteen days, returned to the source of light in the sun. The spirits of evil, on the creation of the visible world, lest they should fly away, and bear off into irrecoverable darkness the light which was still floating about, had been seized by the living spirit, and bound to the stars. Hence the malignant influences of the constellations; hence all the terrific and destructive fury of the elements. While the soft and refreshing and fertilizing showers are the distillation of the celestial spirit, the thunders are the roarings, the lightning the flashing wrath, the hurricane the furious breath, the torrent and destructive rains the sweat, of the Demon of darkness. This wrath is peculiarly excited by the extrication of the passive Jesus, who was said to have been begotten upon the all-conceiving Earth, from his power, by the pure Spirit. The passive Jesus is an emblem, in one sense, it would seem, or type of mankind; more properly, in another, of the imprisoned deity or light. For gradually the souls of men were drawn upwards to the purifying sun; they passed through the twelve signs of the zodiac to the moon, whose waxing and waning was the reception and transmission of light to the sun, and from the sun to the Fountain of Light. Those which were less pure passed again through different bodies, gradually became defecated, during this long metempsychosis; and there only remained a few obstinately and inveterately embued in darkness, whom the final consummation of the visible world would leave in the irreclaimable society of the evil powers. At that consummation, the Homophorus would shake off his load; the world would be dissolved in fire;¹ the powers of darkness

¹ Acta Disput. c. ii. Epiphan. c. 58.

cast back for all eternity to their primeval state; the condemned souls would be kneaded up for ever in impenetrable matter; while the purified souls, in martial hosts, would surround the frontier of the region of light, and for ever prohibit any new irruption from the antagonistic world of darkness.

The worship of the Manicheans was simple: they built no altar, they raised no temple, they had no images, they had no imposing ceremonial. Pure and simple prayer was their only form of adoration;¹ they did not celebrate the birth of Christ, for of his birth they denied the reality; their Paschal feast, as they equally disbelieved the reality of Christ's passion, though kept holy, had little of the Christian form. Prayers addressed to the sun, or at least with their faces directed to that tabernacle in which Christ dwelt; hymns to the great principle of light; exhortations to subdue the dark and sensual element within; and the study of the marvellous Book of Mani,—constituted their devotion. They observed the Lord's Day: they administered baptism, probably with oil; for they seem (though this point is obscure) to have rejected water-baptism: they celebrated the Eucharist; but, as they abstained altogether from wine, they probably used pure water, or water mingled with raisins.² Their manners were austere and ascetic; they tolerated, but

¹ Faustus expresses this sentiment very finely: "Item Pagani aris, delubris, simulacris, atque incenso Deum colendum putant. Ego ab his in hoc quoque multum diversus incedo, qui ipsum me, si modo sim dignus, rationabile Dei templum puto. Vivum vivæ majestatis simulacrum Christum filium ejus accipio; aram, mentem puris artibus et disciplinis imbutam. Honores quoque divinos ac sacrificia in solis orationibus, et ipsis puris et simplicibus pono."—Faust. apud August. xx. 3.

They bitterly taunted the Catholics with their Paganism, their sacrifices, their agapæ, their idols, their martyrs, their Gentile holidays and rites. — Ib.

² August. contra Faust. Disput. i. 2, 3.

hardly tolerated, marriage, and that only among the inferior orders:¹ the theatre, the banquet, even the bath, were severely proscribed. Their diet was of fruits and herbs; they shrank with abhorrence from animal food; and, with Buddhist nicety, would tremble at the guilt of having extinguished the principle of life, the spark, as it were, of celestial light, in the meanest creature. This involved them in the strangest absurdities and contradictions, which are pressed against them by their antagonists with unrelenting logic.² They

¹ St. Augustine accuses them of breaking the Fifth Commandment. "Tu autem doctrinâ dæmoniacâ didicisti inimicos deputare parentes tuos, quod te per concubitus in carne ligaverint, et hoc modo utique deo tuo immundas compedes imposuerint." — Adv. Faust. lib. xv. p. 278. "Opinantur et prædicant diabolum fecisse atque junxisse masculam et feminam." — Idem, lib. xix. p. 331. "Displicet 'crescite et multiplicamini,' ne Dei vestri multiplicentur ergastula," &c. — Adv. Secundum, c. 21.

² Ἀπέχεσθαι γάμων καὶ ἀφροδισίων καὶ τεκνοποιίας, ἵνα μὴ ἐπιπλεῖον ἡ δύναμις ἐνοικήσῃ τῇ ὕλῃ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ γένους διαδοχὴν. — Alexand. Ὑκορ. c. 4.

They asserted, indeed, that their doctrines went no farther in this respect than those of the Catholic Christians. — Faustus, 30, c. 4. Their opposition to marriage is assigned as among the causes of the enmity of the Persian king. "Rex vero Persarum, cum vidisset tam Catholicos et Episcopos, quam Manichæos Manetis sectarios, a nuptiis abstinere, in Manichæos quidem sententiam mortis tulit. Ad Christianos vero idem edictum manavit. Quum igitur Christiani ad regem confugissent, jussit ille discrimen quale inter utrosque esset, sibi exponi." — Apud Asseman. Biblioth. Orient. vii. 220

* There were, however, very different rules of diet and of manners for the elect and the auditors, much resembling those of the monks and other Christians among the Catholics. See quotations in Lardner, ii. 156.

² St. Augustine's treatise De Mor. Manichæor. is full of these extraordinary charges. In the Confessions (iii. 10), he says that the fig wept when it was pucked, and the parent tree poured forth tears of milk; "that particles of the true and Supreme God were imprisoned in an apple, and could not be set free but by the touch of one of the elect. If eaten, therefore, by one not a Manichean, it was a deadly sin; and hence they are charged with making it a sin to give any thing which had life to a poor man not a Manichean. . . . They showed more compassion to the fruits of the earth than to human beings." They abhorred husbandry, it is said, as continually wounding life, even in clearing a field of thorns; "so much more were they friends of gourds than of men."

admitted penitence for sin, and laid the fault of their delinquencies on the overpowering influence of matter.¹

Mani suffered the fate of all who attempt to reconcile conflicting parties, without power to enforce harmony between them. He was disclaimed and rejected with every mark of indignation and abhorrence by both. On his return from exile,² indeed, he was received with respect and favor by the reigning sovereign, Hormouz, the son of Shahpoor, who bestowed upon him a castle named Arabion. In this point alone the Greek and Oriental accounts coincide. It was from his own castle that Mani attempted to propagate his doctrines among the Christians in the province of Babylonia. The fame of Marcellus, a noble Christian soldier, for his charitable acts in the redemption of hundreds of captives, designated him as a convert who might be of invaluable service to the cause of Manicheism. According to the Christian account, Mani experienced a signal discomfiture in his conference with Archelaus, Bishop of Cascar.³ But his dispute with the Magian hierarchy had a more fearful termination. It was an artifice of the

Death of
Mani.

¹ An acknowledgment of the blamelessness of their manners is extorted from St. Augustine; at least, he admits, that, as far as his knowledge as a hearer, he can charge them with no immorality. — Contr. Fortunat. in init. In other parts of his writings, especially in the tract *De Morib. Manichæor.*, he is more unfavorable. But see the remarkable passage, *Contra Faust. v. i.*, in which the Manichean contrasts his *works* with the *faith* of the orthodox Christian.

² According to Malcolm, he did not return till the reign of Baharam

³ Some of the objections of Beausobre to this conference appear insuperable. Allow a city named Cascar; can we credit the choice of Greek, even Heathen, rhetoricians and grammarians as assessors in such a city and in such a contest? Archelaus, it must indeed be confessed, plays the sophist; and, if Mani had been no more powerful as a reasoner or as a speaker, he would hardly have distracted the East and West with his doctrines. It is not improbably an imaginary dialogue in the form, though certainly not in the style, of Plato. See the best edition of it in Routh's *Reliquiæ Sacræ*.

new king Baharam to tempt the dangerous teacher from his castle. He was seized, flayed alive, and his skin, stuffed with straw, placed over the gate of the city of Shahpoor.

But, wild as may appear the doctrines of Mani, they expired not with their author. The anniversary of his death was hallowed by his mourning disciples.¹ The sect was organized upon the Christian model: he left his twelve apostles, his seventy-two bishops,² his priesthood. His distinction between the elect,³ or the perfect, and the hearers, or catechumens, offered an exact image of the orthodox Christian communities; and the latter were permitted to marry, to eat animal food, and to cultivate the earth.⁴ In the East and in the West, the doctrines spread with the utmost rapidity; and the deep im-
Propagation
of his reli-
gion.
pression which they made upon the mind of man may be estimated by Manicheism having become, almost throughout Asia and Europe, a by-word of religious animosity. In the Mohammedan world, the tenets of the Sadducean, the impious Mani, are branded as the worst and most awful impiety. In the West, the progress of the believers in this most dangerous of heresiarchs was so successful, that the followers of Mani

¹ Augustin. contr. Epist. Manichæi, c. 9. The day of Mani's death was kept holy by his followers, because he *really* died; the crucifixion neglected, because Christ had but *seemingly* expired on the cross.

² Augustin. de Hæres, c. 46.

³ The strangest notion was, that vegetables used for food were purified, that is, the divine principle of life and light separated from the material and impure, by passing through the bodies of the elect. "Præbent alimenta electis suis, ut divina illa substantia in eorum ventre purgata, impetret eis veniam, quorum traditur oblatione purganda." — Augustin. de Hæres, c. 46. It was a merit in the hearers to make these offerings. Compare Confess. iv. 1.

⁴ "Auditores, qui appellantur apud eos, et carnibus vescuntur, et agros colunt, et si voluerint, uxores habent, quorum nihil faciunt qui vocantur Electi." — Augustin., Epist. cccxxvii.

were condemned to the flames or to the mines, and the property of those who introduced the "execrable usages and foolish laws of the Persians" into the peaceful empire of Rome, confiscated to the imperial treasury. One of the edicts of Diocletian was aimed at their suppression.¹ St. Augustine himself² with difficulty escaped the trammels of their creed, to become their most able antagonist; and, in every century of Christianity, Manicheism, when its real nature was as much unknown as the Copernican system, was a proverb of reproach against all sectaries who departed from the unity of the Church.

The extent of its success may be calculated by the implacable hostility of all other religions to the doctrines of Mani: the causes of that success are more difficult to conjecture. Manicheism would rally under its banner the scattered followers of the Gnostic sects: but Gnosticism was never, it would seem, popular; while Manicheism seems to have had the power of exciting a fanatic attachment to its tenets in the lower

¹ See the edict in Routh, iv. p. 285. Some doubt has been thrown on its authenticity. It is questioned by S. Basnage and by Lardner, though admitted by Beausobre. I cannot think the ignorance which it betrays of the "true principles of the Manichees," the argument adduced by Lardner, of the least weight. Diocletian's predecessors were as little acquainted with the "true principles of Christianity," yet condemned them in their public proceedings.

² There is something very beautiful in the language of St. Augustine, and at the same time nothing can show more clearly the strong hold which Manicheism had obtained on the Christian world. "*Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt cum quo labore verum inveniatur, et quam difficile caveantur errores. Illi in vos sæviant qui nesciunt quam rarum et arduum sit carnalia phantasmata piæ mentis serenitate superare. . . . Illi in vos sæviant, qui nesciunt quibus suspiriis et gemitibus fiat, ut ex quantulacunque parte possit intelligi Deus. Prostremo illi in vos sæviant, qui nunquam tali errore decepti sint, quali vos deceptos vident.*" — Contr. Epist. Manichæi, c. 2. But the spirit of controversy was too strong for the charity and justice of Augustine. The tract which appears to me to give the fairest view of the real controversy is the *Disputatio contra Fortunatum*.

orders. The severe asceticism of their manners may have produced some effect: but in this respect they could not greatly have outdone monastic Christianity; and the distinct and definite impersonations of their creed, always acceptable to a rude and imaginative class, were encountered by formidable rivals in the demonology and the more complicated form of worship which was rapidly growing up among the Catholics.¹

In the Eastern division of the Roman empire, Christianity had obtained a signal victory. It had subdued by patient endurance the violent hostility of Galerius; it had equally defied the insidious policy of Maximin; it had twice engaged in a contest with the civil government, and twice come forth in triumph. The edict of toleration had been extorted from the dying Galerius; and the Pagan hierarchy, and more splendid Pagan ceremonial, with which Maximin attempted to raise up a rival power, fell to the ground on his defeat by Licinius, which closely followed that of Maxentius by Constantine. The Christian communities had publicly re-assembled; the churches were rising in statelier form in all the cities; the bishops had re-assumed their authority over their scattered but undiminished flocks. Though, in the one case, indignant animosity and the desire of vindicating the severity of their measures against a sect dangerous for its numbers as well as its principles, in

Triumph of
Christianity.

¹ The Manicheans were legally condemned under Valentinian and Valens. The houses in which they held their meetings were confiscated to the state (Cod. Theodos. xvi. 3). By Theodosius they were declared infamous, and incapable of inheriting by law (xvi. 17). The condemnation of the Manicheans in Rome, by Pope Leo I., the Great (the Manicheans in Sicily—Grag. M. Epist. iv. 6); their revival in the Middle Ages, and their extensive dissemination, at least as to their leading principles; the undying obstinacy of their tenets,—is one of the most curious chapters in Christian history. See Latin Christianity, i. 171; iv. 91, &c.

the other the glowing zeal of the martyr, may be suspected of some exaggeration; yet when a public imperial edict, and the declarations of the Christians themselves, assert the numerical predominance of the Christian party, it is impossible to doubt that their numbers, as well as their activity, were imposing and formidable. In a rescript of Maximin, the emperor states that it had been forced on the observation of his august fathers, Diocletian and Maximian, that almost all mankind had abandoned the worship of their ancestors, and united themselves to the Christian sect;¹ and Lucianus, a presbyter of Antioch, who suffered martyrdom under Maximin, asserts in his last speech that the greater part of the world had rendered its allegiance to Christianity, — entire cities, and even the rude inhabitants of country districts.² These statements refer more particularly to the East; and, in the East, various reasons would

¹ Σχεδὸν ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους, καταλειφθείσης τῆς τῶν θεῶν θρησκείας, τῷ ἔθνει τῶν Χριστιανῶν συμμαχότας. — Apud Euseb., Hist. Ec. ix. 9.

² "Pars pœne mundi jam major huic veritati adstipulatur; urbes integræ; aut si in his aliquid suspectum videatur, contestatur de his etiam agrestis manus, ignara figmenti." This speech, it is true, is only contained in the Latin translation of Eusebius by Rufinus. But there is a calm character in its tone, which avouches its authenticity. The high authority of Porson and Dr. Routh requires the addition of the following note: "Præstitisse aliis multitudine his quoque temporibus Christianos, scriptum extat apud Porphyrium, qui eos alicubi nominavit τοὺς πλείονας, ut me olim fecit certiores eruditissimus Porsonus." — Routh, Reliquiæ Sacræ, iii. 293. Gibbon has attempted to form a calculation of the relative numbers of the Christians (see ch. xv. vol. ii. p. 363, with my note): he is perhaps inclined to underrate the proportion which they bore to the Heathens. Yet, notwithstanding the quotations above and the high authority of Porson and of Routh, I should venture to doubt their being the majority, except possibly in a few Eastern cities. In fact, in a population so fluctuating as that of the empire at this time, any accurate calculation would have been nearly impossible. M. Beugnot agrees very much with Gibbon; and, I should conceive, with regard to the West, is clearly right, though I shall allege presently some reasons for the more rapid progress of Christianity in the West of Europe.

lead to the supposition that the Christians bore a larger proportion to the rest of the population than in the other parts of the empire, except perhaps in Africa. The East was the native country of the new religion; the substratum of Judaism, on which it rested, was broader; and Judaism had extended its own conquests much farther by proselytism, and had thus prepared the way for Christianity. In Egypt and in the Asiatic provinces, all the early modifications of Christian opinions, the Gnostic sects of all descriptions, had arisen; showing, as it were, by their fertility the exuberance of religious life and the congeniality of the soil to their prolific vegetation. The constitution of society was, in some respects, more favorable than in Italy to the development of the new religion. But it may be questioned whether the Western *provinces* did not at last offer the most open field for its free and undisputed course. In the East, the civilization was Greek, or, in the remoter regions, Asiatic. The Romans assumed the sovereignty, and the highest offices of the government were long held by men of Italian birth. Some of the richer patricians possessed extensive estates in the different provinces; but, below this, the native population retained its own habits and usages. Unless in the mercantile towns, which were crowded with foreign settlers from all quarters, who brought their manners, their customs, and their deities, the whole society was Greek, Syrian, or Egyptian. Above all, there was a native religion; and however this loose confederacy of religious republics, of independent colleges or fraternities of the local or the national priesthoods, might only be held together by the bond of common hostility to the new faith, yet everywhere this

Different
state of the
East with
regard to the
propagation
of Chris-
tianity.

religion was ancient, established, conformed to the habits of the people, endeared by local vanity, strengthened by its connection with municipal privileges, recognized by the homage and sanctioned by the worship of the civil authorities. The Roman prefect, or proconsul, considered every form of Paganism as sufficiently identified with that of Rome to demand his respect and support: everywhere he found deities with the same names or attributes as those of the imperial city; and everywhere, therefore, there was an alliance, seemingly close and intimate, between the local religion and the civil government.

In the Western provinces, Gaul, Spain, and Britain, but more particularly in Gaul, the constitution of society was very different. It was Roman formed by the influx of colonists from different quarters, and the gradual adoption of Roman manners by the natives. It had grown up on the wane of Paganism. There was no old or established or national religion. The ancient Druidism had been proscribed as a dark and inhuman superstition, or had gradually worn away before the progress of Roman civilization. Out of Italy, the gods of Italy were, to a certain degree, strangers; the Romans, as a nation, built no temples in their conquered provinces: the munificence of an individual, sometimes, perhaps, of the reigning Cæsar, after having laid down the military road, built the aqueduct, or encircled the vast arena of the amphitheatre, might raise a fane to his own tutelary divinity.¹ Of the foreign settlers, each brought his worship; each set up his gods: vestiges of every kind

¹ Eumenius, in his panegyric on Constantine, mentions two temples of Apollo: of one, "the most beautiful in the world," the site is unknown; it is supposed to have been at Lyons or Vienne: the other was at Autun.—Eumen. Paneg. xxi., with the note of Cellarius.

of religion, Greek, Asiatic, Mithraic, have been discovered in Gaul, but none was dominant or exclusive. This state of society would require or welcome, or at all events offer less resistance to the propagation of a new faith. After it had once passed the Alps,¹ Christianity made rapid progress; and the father of Constantine may have been guided no less by policy than humanity, in his reluctant and merciful execution of the persecuting edicts of Diocletian and Galerius.

Such was the position of Christianity when Constantine commenced his struggle for universal empire. In the East, though rejected by the ancient rival of Rome, the kingdom of Persia, it was acknowledged as the religion of the state by a neighboring nation. In the Roman provinces, it was emerging victorious from a period of the darkest trial; and, though still threatened by the hostility of Maximin, that hostility was constrained to wear an artful disguise, and, when it ventured to assume a more open form, was obliged to listen, at least with feigned respect, to the remonstrances of the victorious Constantine. In the North, at least in that part from which Constantine derived his main strength, it was respected and openly favored by the Government. Another striking circumstance might influence the least superstitious mind, and is stated by the ecclesiastical historian not to have been without effect on Constantine himself. Of all the emperors who had been invested with the purple, either as Augusti or Cæsars, during the persecution of the Christians, his father alone, the protector of Christianity, had gone down to an honored and peaceful

¹ "Serius trans alpes religione Dei susceptâ?" — Sulpic. Sever., H. E. lib. ii.

grave.¹ Diocletian, indeed, still lived, but in what, no doubt, appeared to most of his former subjects an in glorious retirement. However the philosophy of the abdicated emperor might teach him to show the vegetables of his garden as worthy of as much interest to a mind of real dignity as the distinctions of worldly honor; however he may have been solicited by a falling and desperate faction to resume the purple,—his abdication was no doubt, in general, attributed to causes less dignified than the contempt of earthly grandeur. Conscious derangement of mind (a malady inseparably connected, according to the religious notions of Jew, Pagan, probably of Christian during that age, with the divine displeasure), or remorse of conscience, was reported to embitter the calm decline of Diocletian's life. Instead of an object of envy, no doubt, in the general sentiment of mankind, he was thought to merit only aversion or contempt.² Maximian (Herculius), the colleague of Diocletian, after resuming the purple, engaging in base intrigues, or open warfare, against his son Maxentius, and afterwards against his protector Constantine, had anticipated the sentence of the executioner. Severus had been made prisoner, and forced to open his own veins. Galerius, the chief

¹ Euseb., Vit. Const. i. 21; Socrat., Eccles. Hist. i. 11. The language of the ecclesiastical historian Socrates is remarkable. Constantine, he says, was meditating the liberation of the empire from its tyrants: καὶ ὡς ἦν ἐν τηλικαύτῃ φροντίδι, ἐπενόει τίνα θεὸν ἐκίκουρον πρὸς τὴν μάχην καλέσειν, κατὰ νοῦν δὲ ἐλάμβανεν, ὡς οὐδὲν ὥναυτο οἱ περὶ Διοκλητιανὸν, περὶ τοὺς ἐλλήνων θεοὺς διακείμενοι, ἤνρισκεν τε ὡς ὁ αὐτοῦ πατὴρ, Κωνσταντῖος, ἀποστραφεὶς τὰς Ἑλλήνων θρησκείας, εὐδαιμονέστερον τὸν βίον δῆγαγεν. It was in this mood of mind that he saw the vision of the cross. — Socr., Eccl. Hist. i. 2.

² It is curious how undying are such prejudices. I remember that M. Crétineau Joly somewhere asserts that Clement XIV. (Ganganelli) was the only Pope who ever died in a state of derangement (Boniface VIII.?). I doubt both his historical facts; but the assertion is remarkable.

author of the persecution, had experienced the most miserable fate; he had wasted away with a slow and agonizing and loathsome disease. Maximin alone remained, hereafter to perish in miserable obscurity. Nor should it be forgotten that the great persecutor of the Christians had been the jealous tyrant of Constantine's youth. Constantine had preserved his liberty, perhaps his life, only by the boldness and rapidity of his flight from the court of Galerius.¹

Under all these circumstances, Constantine was advancing against Rome. The battle of Verona had decided the fate of the empire; the vast forces of Maxentius had melted away before the sovereign of Gaul: but Rome, the capital, was still held with the obstinacy of despair by the voluptuous tyrant Maxentius. Constantine appeared on the banks of the Tiber, though invested with the Roman purple, yet a foreign conqueror. Many of his troops were Barbarians, Kelts, Germans, Britons; yet, in all probability, there were many of the Gaulish Christians in his army. Maxentius threw himself upon the gods, as well as upon the people, of Rome: he attempted with desperate earnestness to rally the energy of Roman valor under the awfulness of the Roman religion.

War of
Constantine
against
Maxentius.

A.D. 312.

During the early part of his reign, Maxentius, intent upon his pleasures, had treated the religious divisions of Rome with careless indifference, or had endeavored to conciliate the Christian

Religion of
Maxentius.

¹ In his letter to Sapor, King of Persia, Constantine himself acknowledges the influence of these motives on his mind: *ὅν πολλοὶ τῶν τῇδε βασιλευσάντων, μανιώδεσι πλάναις ὑπαχθέντες, ἐπεχείρησαν ἀρνήσασθαι, ἀλλ' ἐκείνους ἅπαντας τοιοῦτον τιμωρὸν τέλος κατανόησεν, ὥς πᾶν τὸ μετ' ἐκείνου ἀνθρώπων γένος, τὰς ἐκείνων συμφορὰς ἀντ' ἄλλου παραδείγματος, ἐπαρά τοις τοῖς τὰ ὁμοία ζηλοῦσι τίθεσθαι.* — Apud Theodoret, Ecc. Hist. i. c. 25

party by conniving at their security. His deification of Galerius had been, as it were, an advance to the side of Paganism. The rebellion of Africa, which he revenged by the devastation of Carthage, was likely to bring him into hostile contact with the numerous Christians of that province. In Rome itself an event had occurred, which, however darkly described, was connected with the antagonistic religious parties in the capital. A fire had broken out in the temple of the Fortune of Rome. The tutelary deity of the Roman greatness—an awful omen in this dark period of decline and dissolution!—was in danger. A soldier—it is difficult to ascribe such temerity to any but a Christian fanatic—uttered some words of insult against the revered, and it might be alienated, goddess. The indignant populace rushed upon the traitor to the majesty of Rome, and summoned the pretorian cohorts to wreak their vengeance on all who could be supposed to share in the sentiments of the apostate soldier. Maxentius is accused by one Christian and one Pagan historian of having instigated the tumult; by one Pagan he is said to have used his utmost exertions to allay its fury. Both statements may be true: though at first he may have given free scope to the massacre, at a later period he may have taken alarm, and attempted to restore the peace of the city.¹ Of the direct hostility of Maxentius to Christianity, the

¹ The silence of Eusebius as to the Christianity of the soldier may be thought an insuperable objection to this view. But, in the first place, the Eastern bishop was but imperfectly informed on the affairs of Rome, and might hesitate, if aware of the fact, to implicate the Christian name with that which was so long one of the most serious and effective charges against the faith,—its treacherous hostility to the greatness of Rome. The words of the Pagan Zosimus are very strong: Βλάσφημα ῥήματα κατὰ τοῦ θείου στρατιωτῶν τις ἄφεις, καὶ τοῦ πλήθους διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσέβειαν ἐπέλθοντος ἀναμειβείς. — Zos., Hist. ii. 13.

evidence is dubious and obscure. A Roman matron preferred the glory or the crime of suicide, rather than submit to his lustful embraces. But it was the beauty, no doubt, not the religion, of Sophronia, which excited the passions of Maxentius, whose licentiousness comprehended almost all the noble families of Rome in its insulting range.¹ The papal history, not improbably resting on more ancient authority, represents Maxentius as degrading the pope Marcellus to the humble function of a groom. The predecessor of the Gregories and Innocents swept the imperial stable.²

The darkening and more earnest Paganism of Maxentius is more clearly disclosed by the circumstances of his later history. He had ^{His Paganism.} ever listened with trembling deference to the expounders of signs and omens. He had suspended his expedition against Carthage, because the signs were not propitious.³ Before the battle of Verona, he commanded the Sibylline books to be consulted. "The enemy of the Romans will perish," answered the prudent and ambiguous oracle; but who could be the enemy of Rome but the foreign Constantine, descending from his imperial residence at Treves, with troops levied in the barbarous provinces, and of whom the gods of Rome, though not yet declaredly hostile to their cause, might entertain a jealous suspicion?

On the advance of Constantine, Maxentius redoubled his religious activity. He paid his adoration at the altars of all the gods; he consulted all the diviners of future events.⁴ He had shut himself in his palace:

¹ Euseb., Vit. Const. i. 33, 34.

² Anastasius, Vit. Marcell.; Platina, Vit. Pontificum in Marcello.

³ Zosimus, ii. 14.

⁴ Eusebius (Vit. Const. i. 21) speaks of his *κακοτέχνους καὶ γοητεὺς μαγανείας*.

the adverse signs made him take refuge in a private house.¹ Darker rumors were propagated in the East: he is reported to have attempted to read the secrets of futurity in the entrails of pregnant women;² to have sought an alliance with the infernal deities, and endeavored by magical formularies to avert the impending danger. However the more enlightened Pagans might disclaim the weak, licentious, and sanguinary Maxentius as the representative either of the Roman majesty or the Roman religion, in the popular mind probably an intimate connection united the cause of the Italian sovereign with the fortunes and the gods of Rome. It is possible that Constantine might attempt to array against this imposing barrier of ancient superstition the power of the new and triumphant faith: he might appeal, as it were, to the God of the Christians against the gods of the capital. His small though victorious army might derive courage in their attack on the fate-hallowed city, from whose neighborhood Galerius had so recently returned in discomfiture, from a vague notion that they were under the protection of a tutelar deity, of whose nature they were but imperfectly informed, and whose worshippers constituted no insignificant part of their barbarian army.

Up to this period, all that we know of Constantine's religion would imply that he was outwardly, and even zealously, Pagan. In a public oration, his panegyrist extols the magnificence of his offerings to the gods. His victorious presence was not merely expected to restore more than their former splendor to the Gaulish cities, ruined by barbaric incursions; but sumptuous temples were to arise at

Religion of
Constantine.

¹ Zosimus, ii. 14.

² Euseb., Vit Const. i. 36.

his bidding, to propitiate the deities, particularly Apollo, his tutelary god.¹ The medals struck for these victories are covered with the symbols of Paganism. Eusebius himself admits that Constantine was at this time in doubt which religion he should embrace, and, after his vision, required to be instructed in the doctrines of Christianity.²

The scene in which the memorable vision of Constantine is laid varies widely in the different accounts. Several places in Gaul lay claim to the honor of this momentous event in Christian history. If we assume the most probable period for such an occurrence, whatever explanation we adopt of the vision itself, it would be at this awful crisis in the destiny of Constantine and of the world, before the walls of Rome; an instant when, if we could persuade ourselves that the Almighty Ruler, *in such a manner*, interposed to proclaim the fall of Paganism and the establishment of Christianity, it would have been a public and a solemn occasion, worthy of the divine interference. Nowhere, on the other hand, was the high-wrought imagination of Constantine so likely to be seized with religious awe, and to transform some extraordinary appearance in the heavens into the sign of the prevailing Deity of Christ; nowhere, lastly, would policy more imperiously require some strong religious impulse to counterbalance the hostile terrors of Paganism, embattled against him.

¹ "Merito igitur augustissima illa delubra tantis donariis honorâsti, ut jam vetera non querant. Jam omnia vocare ad se templa videntur, præcipueque Apollo noster, cujus ferventibus aquis perjuria puniuntur, quæ te maxime oportet odisse. Nec magis Jovi Junonique recubantibus terra submitit, quam circa tua, Constantine, vestigia urbes et templa consurgunt." — Eumenii Panegyri. cxxi.

² Ἐννοεῖ δὴτα ὁποῖον δέου θεοῦ περιγραφῆσθαι βoηθὸν. — Euseb., Vit. Constant. c. 27-32.

Eusebius,¹ the Bishop of Cæsarea, asserts that Constantine himself made, and confirmed by an oath, the extraordinary statement, which was received with implicit veneration during many ages of Christianity, but which the severer judgment of modern historical inquiry has called in question, has investigated with the most searching accuracy, and almost universally destroyed its authority with rational men; yet, it must be admitted, found no satisfactory explanation of its origin.² While Constantine was meditat-

Vision of
Constantine.

¹ Vit. Const. i. 28. The recent editor of Eusebius has well called the life of Constantine a Christian Cyropædia.

² The silence, not only of all contemporary history (the legend of Artemius, abandoned even by Tillemont, does not deserve the name), but of Eusebius himself, in his Ecclesiastical History, gives a most dangerous advantage to those who altogether reject the story. But on whom is the invention of the story to be fathered? On Eusebius? who, although his conscience might not be delicately scrupulous on the subject of pious fraud, is charged with no more than the suppression of truth, not with the direct invention of falsehood. Or on Constantine himself? Could it be with him a deliberate fiction to command the higher veneration of the Christian party? Or was his imagination at the time, or was his memory in his later days, deceived by some inexplicable illusion?

The first excursus of Heinichen, in his edition of Eusebius, contains the fullest, and, on the whole, the most temperate and judicious discussion of this subject, so inexhaustibly interesting, yet so inexplicable, to the historical inquirer. There are three leading theories, variously modified by their different partisans: 1. A real miracle. 2. A natural phenomenon, presented to the imagination of the emperor. 3. A deliberate invention on the part of the emperor, or of Eusebius. The first has few partisans in the present day. "Ut enim miraculo Constantinum a superstitione gentili avocatum esse, nemo facile hac ætate adhuc credet." — Heinichen, p. 522. Independent of all other objections, the moral difficulty in the text is to me conclusive. The third has its partisans, but appears to me to be absolutely incredible. But the general consent of the more learned and dispassionate writers seems in favor of the second, which was first, I believe, suggested by F. Albert Fabricius. In this concur Schroeck, the German Church historian, Neander, Manso, Heinichen, and, in short, all modern writers who have any claim to historical criticism.

The great difficulty which encumbers the theory which resolves it into a solar halo or some natural phenomenon is the legend *ἐν τοῦτω νύκτα*, which no optical illusion can well explain, if it be taken literally. The only rational theory is to suppose that this was the inference drawn by the mind

ing in grave earnestness the claims of the rival religions, — on one hand the awful fate of those who had persecuted Christianity, on the other the necessity of some divine assistance to counteract the magical incantations of his enemy, — he addressed his prayers to the One Great Supreme. On a sudden, a short time after noon, appeared a bright cross in the heavens, just above the sun, with this inscription, “By this, conquer.” Awe seized himself and the whole army, who were witnesses of the wonderful phenomenon. But of the signification of the vision Constantine was altogether ignorant. Sleep fell upon his harassed mind; and, during his sleep, Christ himself appeared, and enjoined him to make a banner in the shape of that celestial sign, under which his arms would be for ever crowned with victory.

Constantine immediately commanded the famous Labarum to be made, — the Labarum which for a long time was borne at the head of the imperial armies, and venerated as a sacred relic at Constantinople. The shaft of this celebrated standard was cased with gold; above the transverse beam, which formed the

of Constantine, and embodied in these words; which, from being inscribed on the Labarum, or on the arms or any other public monument, as commemorative of the event, gradually grew into an integral part of the original vision.

The later and more poetic writers adorn the shields and the helmets of the whole army with the sign of the cross.

Testis Christicolæ ducis adventantis ad urbem
 Mulvius, exceptum Tiberina in stagna tyrannum
 Præcipitans, quamam victricia viderit arma
 Majestate regi, quod signum dextera vindex
 Prætulerit, quali radiarint stemmate pila.
 Christus purpureum, gemmantis textus in auro,
 Signabat labarum, *clypeorum insignia* Christus
 Scripserat: ardebat summis crux addita cristis.

Prudent. in Symmachum ▼ 482

Euseb., Vit. Const. i. 28; H. E. ix. 9. Zosimus, ii. 15. Maxso, *Leben Constantins*, p. 41, *seqq.*

cross, was wrought in a golden crown the monogram, or rather the device of two letters, which signified the name of Christ. And so, for the first time, the meek and peaceful Jesus became a God of battle; and the cross, the holy sign of Christian redemption, a banner of bloody strife.

This irreconcilable incongruity between the symbol of universal peace and the horrors of war, in my judgment, is conclusive against the miraculous or supernatural character of the transaction.¹ Yet the admission of Christianity, not merely as a controlling power, and the most effective auxiliary of civil government (an office not unbecoming its divine origin), but as the animating principle of barbarous warfare, argues at once the commanding influence which it had obtained over the human mind, as well as its degeneracy from its pure and spiritual origin. The unimpeached and unquestioned authority of this miracle during so many centuries shows how completely, in the association which took place between Barbarism and Christianity, the former maintained its predominance. This was the first advance to the military Christianity of the Middle Ages,—a modification of the pure religion of the Gospel, if directly opposed to its genuine principles, still apparently indispensable

¹ I was agreeably surprised to find that Mosheim concurred in these sentiments, for which I will readily encounter the charge of Quakerism.

"Hæcine oratio servatori generis humani, qui peccata hominum morte suâ expiavit; hæcine oratio illo digna est, qui pacis auctor mortalibus est, et suos hostibus ignoscere vult. . . . Caveamus ne veterum Christianorum narrationibus de ætatis suæ miraculis acrius defendendis in ipsam majestatem Dei, et sanctissimam religionem, quæ non hostes, sed non ipsos debellare docet, injurii simus."—De Reb. ante Const. 985. When the empress Helena, among the other treasures of the tomb of Christ, found the nails which fastened him to the cross, Constantine turned them into a helmet and bits for his war-horse. — Socrates, i. 17. True or fabulous, the story is characteristic of the *Christian* sentiment then prevalent.

to the social progress of men; through which the Roman empire and the barbarous nations, which were blended together in the vast European and Christian system, must necessarily have passed, before they could arrive at a higher civilization and a purer Christianity.

The fate of Rome and of Paganism was decided in the battle of the Milvian Bridge; the eventual result was the establishment of the Christian empire. But to Constantine himself, if at this time Christianity had obtained any hold upon his mind, it was now the Christianity of the warrior, as subsequently it was that of the statesman. It was the military commander who availed himself of the assistance of any tutelar divinity who might insure success to his daring enterprise.

Christianity, in its higher sense, appeared neither in the acts nor in the decrees of the victorious Constantine after the defeat of Maxentius.

Conduct of
Constantine
after his vic-
tory over
Maxentius.

Though his general conduct was tempered with a wise clemency, yet the execution of his enemies and the barbarous death of the infant son of Maxentius still showed the same relentless disposition which had exposed the barbarian chieftains, whom he had taken in his successful campaign beyond the Rhine, in the arena at Treves.¹ The emperor still maintained the same proud superiority over the conflicting religions of the empire, which afterwards appeared at the foundation of the new metropolis. Even in the Labarum, if the initiated eyes of the Christian soldiery could discern the sacred symbol of Christ in-

¹ One of these barbarous acts was selected by the panegyrical orator as a topic of the highest praise. "Puberes, qui in manus venerunt et quorum nec perfidia erat apta militiæ nec ferocia severitati, ad pœnas spectaculo dati, sævientes bestias multitudine suâ fatigarunt." — Eumenii Panegr. c. xii.

distinctly glittering above the cross, there appeared, either embossed on the beam below, or embroidered on the square purple banner which depended from it, the bust of the emperor and those of his family, to whom the Heathen part of his army might pay their homage of veneration. Constantine, though he does not appear to have ascended to the Capitol, to pay his homage and to offer sacrifice¹ to Jupiter the best and greatest, and the other tutelary deities of Rome (in general the first act of a victorious emperor), yet did not decline to attend the sacred games.² Among the acts of the conqueror in Rome was the restoration of the Pagan temples; among his imperial titles he did not decline that of the Pontifex Maximus.³ The province of Africa, in return for the bloody head of their oppressor Maxentius, was permitted to found a college of priests in honor of the Flavian family.

The first public edict of Constantine in favor of Christianity is lost: that issued at Milan, in the joint names of Constantine and Licinius, is the great charter of the liberties of Christianity.⁴ But it is an edict of full and unlimited toleration, and no more. It recognizes Christianity as one of the legal forms by which the Divinity may be worshipped.⁵ It performs an act of justice in restor-

Edict of
Constantine
from Milan.

¹ Euseb., Vit. Const. i. 51. Le Beau, Histoire du Bas Empire, i. ii. c. xvi.

² "Nec quidquam aliud homines, diebus munerum sacrorumque ludorum, quam te ipsum spectare potuerunt." — Incert. Paneg. c. xix.

³ Zosimus, iv. 36.

⁴ The edict, or rather the copy, sent by Licinius to the Prefect of Bithynia in Lactantius, De Mort. Pers. xlviii.

⁵ Decree of Milan, A.D. 313. "Hæc ordinanda esse credidimus, ut daremus et Christianis et omnibus liberam potestatem sequendi religionem quam quisque voluisset, quod quidem *divinitas* in sede cœlesti nobis atque omnibus qui sub potestate nostrâ sunt constituti, placata ac propitia possit existere." [This *divinitas*, I conceive, was that equivocal term for the Supreme Deity

ing all the public buildings and the property which had been confiscated by the persecuting edicts of former emperors. Where the churches or their sites remained in the possession of the imperial treasury, they were restored without any compensation; where they had been alienated, the grants were resumed; where they had been purchased, the possessors were offered an indemnity for their enforced and immediate surrender, from the state. The prefects were to see the restitution carried into execution without delay and without chicanery. But the same absolute freedom of worship was secured to all other religions; and this proud and equitable indifference is to secure the favor of the Divinity to the reigning emperors. The whole tone of this edict is that of imperial clemency, which condescends to take under its protection an oppressed and injured class of subjects, rather than that of an awe-struck proselyte, esteeming Christianity the one true religion, and already determined to enthrone it as the dominant and established faith of the empire.

The earlier laws of Constantine, though in their effects favorable to Christianity, claimed some deference, as it were, to the ancient religion

Earlier laws
of Constantine.

admitted by the Pagan as well as the Christian. What Zosimus called τὸ θεῖον] "etiam aliis religionis suæ vel observantiæ potestatem similiter apertam, et liberam, pro quiete temporis nostri esse concessam, ut in colendo quod quisque delegerit, habeat liberam facultatem, quia (nolumus detrahi) honori neque cuiquam religioni aliquid a nobis."

I will transcribe, however, the observations of Kestner on this point: "Multi merito observârunt, animum illud ostendere (sc. decretum Mediolense) ab antiqua religione minime alienum. Observandum vero, parum hoc decretum valere, ut veram Constantini mentem inde intelligamus. Non solus quippe illius auctor fuit, sed Licinius quoque — Huic autem — etsi iis (Christianis) non sincerus erat amicus, parcere debuit Constantinus; neque cæteria displicere voluit subditis, qui antiquam religionem profiterentur. Quamvis igitur etiam religionis indole plenius jam fuisset imbutus, ob rerum tamen, quæ id temporis erant, conditionem, manifestare mentem non potuisset." Kestner, *Disp. de commut. quam, Constant. M. auct. societas subiit Christiana*. Compare Heinichen, *Excurs. in Vit. Const.* p. 513.

in the ambiguity of their language, and the cautious terms in which they interfered with the liberty of Paganism. The rescript commanding the celebration of the Christian Sabbath bears no allusion to its peculiar sanctity as a Christian institution. It is the day of the Sun, which is to be observed by the general veneration. The courts were to be closed, and the noise and tumult of public business and legal litigation were no longer to violate the repose of the sacred day. But the believer in the new Paganism, of which the solar worship was the characteristic, might acquiesce without scruple in the sanctity of the first day of the week. The genius of Christianity appears more manifestly in

Sanctity of
the Sunday.

the single civil act, which was exempted from the general restriction on public business.

The courts were to be open for the manumission of slaves on the hallowed day.¹ In the first aggression on the freedom of Paganism, though the earliest law speaks in a severe and vindictive tone, a second tempers the stern language of the former statute, and actually authorizes the superstition against which it is directed, as far as it might be supposed beneficial to mankind. The itinerant soothsayers and diviners, who exercised their arts in private houses, formed no recognized part of the old religion. Their rites were

Against
divination.

supposed to be connected with all kinds of cruel and licentious practices,—with magic and unlawful sacrifices. They performed their ceremonies at midnight among tombs, where they evoked the dead; or in dark chambers, where they made libations of the blood of the living. They were darkly rumored not to abstain, on occasions, from human blood, to offer children on the altar, and to read the

¹ Cod. Theodos. ii., viii. 1. Vit. Constant. iv. 18. Zosimus, i. 8.

secrets of futurity in the palpitating entrails of human victims. These unholy practices were proscribed by the old Roman law and the old Roman religion. This kind of magic was a capital offence by the laws of the Twelve Tables. Secret divinations had been interdicted by former emperors, — by Tiberius and by Diocletian.¹ The suppression of these rites by Constantine might appear no more than a strong regulation of police for the preservation of the public morals.² The soothsayer, who should presume to enter a private house to practise his unlawful art, was to be burned alive; those who received him were condemned to the forfeiture of their property and to exile. But in the public temple, according to the established rites, the priests and seers might still unfold the secrets of futurity; the people were recommended to apply to them rather than to the unauthorized diviners, and this permission was more explicitly guaranteed by a subsequent rescript.³ Those arts which professed to avert the thunder from the house, the hurricane and the desolating shower from the fruitful field, were expressly sanctioned as beneficial to the husbandman. Even in case of the royal palace being struck by lightning, the ancient ceremony of propitiating the Deity was to be practised, and the haruspices were to declare the meaning of the awful portent.⁴

Yet some acts of Constantine, even at this early period, might encourage the expanding hopes of the

¹ "Haruspices secreto ac sine testibus consuli vetuit." — Suetonius, Tib. c. 63. "Ars mathematica damnabilis est et interdicta omnino." Compare Beugnot, i. 79.

² It was addressed to Maximus, prefect of the city. — Cod. Theod. xi. 8, 2.

³ "Adite aras publicas atque delubra, et consuetudinis vestræ celebrate solemnia: nec enim prohibemus præteritæ usurpationis officia liberâ luce tractari." — Cod. Theodos. xi. 16.

⁴ Ccd. Theodos. ix. 16, xvi. 10

Christians, that they were destined before long to receive more than impartial justice from the emperor. His acts of liberality were beyond those of a sovereign disposed to redress the wrongs of an oppressed class of his subjects: he not merely enforced by his edict the restoration of their churches and estates, he enabled them, by his own munificence, — his gift of a large sum of money to the Christians of Africa, — to rebuild their ruined edifices, and restore their sacred rites with decent solemnity.¹ Many of the churches in Rome claim the first Christian emperor for their founder. The most distinguished of these, and, at the same time, those which are best supported in their pretensions to antiquity, stood on the sites now occupied by the Lateran and by St. Peter's. If it could be ascertained at what period in the life of Constantine these churches were built, some light might be thrown on the history of his personal religion. For, the Lateran being an imperial palace, the grant of a basilica within its walls for the Christian worship (for such we may conjecture to have been the first church) was a kind of direct recognition, if not of his own regular personal attendance, at least of his admission of Christianity within his domestic circle.² The palace was afterwards granted to the Christians, the first patrimony of the popes. The Vatican suburb seems to have been the favorite place for the settlement of foreign religions. It was thickly peopled with Jews from an early period;³ and remarkable vestiges of the worship

Constantine's
encourage-
ment of Chris-
tianity.

Churches in
Rome.

¹ See the original grant of three thousand sölles to Cæcilian, Bishop of Carthage, in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* x. 6.

² The Lateran was the residence of the princess Fausta: it is called the *Domus Faustæ* in the account of the first synod held to decide on the Donatist schism. — *Optat.* i. 23. Fausta may have been a Christian.

³ Basnage, vii. 210, *Hist. of Jews.*

of Cybele, which appear to have flourished side by side, as it were, with that of Christianity, remained to the fourth or the fifth century.¹ The site of St. Peter's Church was believed to occupy the spot hallowed by his martyrdom; and the Christians must have felt no unworthy pride in employing the materials of Nero's Circus, the scene of the sanguinary pleasures of the first persecutor, on a church dedicated to the memory of his now honored, if not absolutely worshipped, victim.

With the protection, the emperor assumed the control over the affairs of the Christian communities: to the cares of the public administration was added a recognized supremacy over the Christian Church. The extent to which Christianity now prevailed is shown by the importance at once assumed by the Christian bishops, who brought not only their losses and their sufferings during the persecution of Diocletian, but, unhappily, likewise their quarrels, before the imperial tribunal. From his palace at Treves, Constantine had not only to assemble military councils to debate on the necessary measures for the protection of the German frontier and the maintenance of the imperial armies, and councils of finance to remodel and enforce the taxation of the different provinces, but likewise synods of Christian bishops to decide on the contests which had grown up in the remote and unruly province of Africa. The emperor himself is said frequently to have appeared without his imperial state, and, with neither guards nor officers around him, to have mingled in the debate, and expressed his satisfaction at their unanimity, whenever that rare virtue adorned their counsels.²

¹ Bunsen und Platner, Roms' Beschreibung, i. p. 23.

² Euseb., Vit. Const. I. xlv.: χαίροντα δεικνὺς ἑαυτὸν τῇ κοινῇ πάντων

For Constantine, though he could give protection, could not give peace, to Christianity. It is the nature of man, that whatever powerfully moves, agitates to excess the public mind. With new views of those subjects which make a deep and lasting impression, new passions awaken. The profound stagnation of the human mind during the government of the earlier Cæsars had been stirred in its inmost depths by the silent underworking of the new faith. Momentous questions, which up to that time had been entirely left to a small intellectual aristocracy, had been calmly debated in the villa of the Roman senator or the grove sacred to philosophy, or discussed by sophists whose frigid dialectics wearied without exciting the mind, had been gradually brought down to the common apprehension. The nature of the Deity; the state of the soul after death; the equality of mankind in the sight of the Deity, — even questions which are beyond the verge of human intellect; the origin of evil; the connection of the physical and moral world, — had become general topics: they were, for the first time, the primary truths of a popular religion, and naturally could not withdraw themselves from the alliance with popular passions. These passions, as Christianity increased in power and influence, came into more active operation; as they seized on persons of different temperament, instead of being themselves subdued to Christian gentleness, they inflamed Christianity, as it appeared to the world, into a new and more indomitable principle of strife and animosity. Mankind, even within the sphere of Christianity, retrograded to the sterner Jewish character; and in its

δημονοία. — Eusebius says, too, that he conducted himself as the bishop of the bishops.

spirit, as well as in its language, the Old Testament began to dominate over the Gospel of Christ.

The first civil wars which divided Christianity were those of Donatism and the Trinitarian controversy. The Gnostic sects, in their different varieties, and the Manichean, were rather rival religions than Christian factions. Though the adherents of these sects professed to be disciples of Christianity yet they had their own separate constitutions, their own priesthood, their own ceremonial. Donatism was a fierce and implacable schism in an established community. It was embraced with all the wild ardor, and maintained with the blind obstinacy, of the African temperament. It originated in a disputed appointment to the episcopal dignity at Carthage. The Bishop of Carthage, if in name inferior (for every thing connected with the ancient capital still maintained its superior dignity in the general estimation), stood higher, probably, in proportion to the extent of his influence and the relative numbers of his adherents, as compared with the Pagan population, than any Christian dignitary in the West. The African churches had suffered more than usual oppression during the persecution of Diocletian, not improbably during the invasion of Maxentius. External force, which in other quarters compressed the body into closer and more compact unity, in Africa left behind it a fatal principle of disorganization. These rival claims to the see of Carthage brought the opponent parties into inevitable collision.

The pontifical offices of Paganism, ministering in a ceremonial to which the people were either indifferent or bound only by habitual attachment, calmly descended in their hereditary course, were nominated

by the municipal magistracy, or attached to the higher civil offices. They awoke no ambition, they caused no contention; they did not interest society enough to disturb it. But the growth of the sacerdotal power was a necessary consequence of the development of Christianity. The hierarchy asserted (they were believed to possess) the power of sealing the eternal destiny of man. From a post of danger, which modest piety was compelled to assume by the unsought and unsolicited suffrages of the whole community, a bishopric had become an office of dignity, influence, and, at times, of wealth. The prelate ruled not now so much by his admitted superiority in Christian virtue, as by the inalienable authority of his office. He opened or closed the door of the church, which was tantamount to an admission or an exclusion from everlasting bliss; he uttered the sentence of excommunication, which cast back the trembling delinquent among the lost and perishing Heathen. He had his throne in the most distinguished part of the Christian temple; and though yet acting in the presence and in the name of his college of presbyters, yet he was the acknowledged head of a large community, over whose eternal destiny he held a vague, but not therefore less imposing and awful, dominion. Among the African Christians, perhaps by the commanding character of Cyprian, in his writings at least, the episcopal power is elevated to its utmost height. No wonder that, with the elements of strife fermenting in the society, and hostile parties already arrayed against each other, the contest for this commanding post should often be commenced with blind violence, and carried on with irreconcilable hostility.¹

Christian
hierarchy
different from
Pagan priest-
hood.

¹ The principal source of information concerning the Donatist controversy

In every community, no doubt, had grown up a severer party, who were anxious to contract the pale of salvation to the narrowest compass; and a more liberal class, who were more lenient to the infirmities of their brethren, and would extend to the utmost limits the beneficial effects of the Redemption. The fiery ordeal of the persecution tried the Christians of Africa by the most searching test, and drew more strongly the line of demarcation. Among the summary proceedings of the persecution, which were carried into effect with unrelenting severity by Anulinus, the Prefect of Africa (the same who, by a singular vicissitude in political affairs, became the instrument of Constantine's munificent grants to the churches of his province),¹ none was more painful to the feelings of the Christians than the demand of the unconditional surrender of the furniture of their sacred edifices, their chalices, their ornaments, above all, the sacred writings.² The bishop and his priests were made responsible for the full and unreserved delivery of these sacred possessions. Some from timidity, others considering that by such concessions it might be prudent to avert more dangerous trials, and that such treasures, sacred as they were, might be replaced in a more flourishing state of the Church, complied with the demands of the magistrate; but, by their severer brethren, who, with more uncompromising

is the works of Optatus, with the valuable collection of documents subjoined to them; and, for their later history, various passages in the works of St. Augustine.

¹ See the grant of Constantine referred to above.

² There is a very curious and graphic account of the rigorous perquisition for the sacred books in the *Gesta apud Zenophilum* in Routh, vol. iv. p. 108. The codices appear to have been under the care of the readers, who were of various ranks, mostly, however, in trade. There were a great number of codices, each probably containing one book of the Scriptures.

courage, had refused the least departure from the tone of unqualified resistance, these men The Traditors. were branded with the ignominious name of Traditors.¹ This became the strong, the impassable, line of demarcation between the contending factions. To the latest period of the conflict, the Donatists described the Catholic party by that odious appellation.

The primacy of the African Church was the object of ambition to these two parties; an unfortunate vacancy at this time kindled the smouldering embers of strife. Contest for the see of Carthage. Mensurius had filled the see of Carthage with prudence and moderation during these days of emergency. He was accused by the sterner zeal of Donatus, a Numidian bishop, of countenancing at least the criminal concessions of the Traditors. It was said that he had deluded the Government by a subtle stratagem; he had substituted certain heretical writings for the genuine Scriptures; had connived at their seizure, and calmly seen them delivered to the flames. The Donatists either disbelieved, or despised as a paltry artifice, this attempt to elude the glorious danger of resistance. But, during the life of Mensurius, his character and station had overawed the hostile party. Mensurius was summoned to Rome, to answer on a charge of the concealment of the deacon Felix, accused of a political offence,—the publication of a libel against the emperor. On his departure, Mensurius intrusted to the deacons of the community the valuable vessels of gold and silver belonging to the church, of which he left an accurate inventory in the hands of a pious and aged woman.

¹ The Donatists invariably called the Catholic party the Traditors. See *Sermo* Donatista and the Acts of Donatist Martyr.

Mensurius died on his return to Carthage. Cæcilian, a deacon of the church, was raised by the unanimous suffrages of the clergy and people to the see of Carthage. He was consecrated by Felix, Bishop of Apthunga. His first step was to demand the vessels of the church. By the advice of Botrus and Celeusius, two of the deacons, competitors, it is said, with Cæcilian for the see, they were refused to a bishop irregularly elected, and consecrated by a notorious Traditor. A Spanish female, of noble birth and of opulence, accused of personal hostility to Cæcilian, animated the Carthaginian faction: but the whole province assumed the right of interference with the appointment to the primacy; and Donatus, Bishop of Casæ Nigræ, placed himself at the head of the opponent party.

The commanding mind of Donatus swayed the countless hierarchy which crowded the different provinces of Africa. The Numidian bishops took the lead; Secundus, the primate of Numidia, at the summons of Donatus, appeared in Carthage at the head of seventy of his bishops. This self-installed Council of Carthage proceeded to cite Cæcilian, who refused to recognize its authority. The council declared his election void. The consecration by a bishop guilty of tradition was the principal ground on which his election was annulled. But darker charges were openly advanced or secretly murmured against Cæcilian,—charges which, if not entirely ungrounded, show that the question of tradition had, during the persecution, divided the Christians into fierce and hostile factions. He was said to have embittered the last hours of those whose more dauntless resistance put to shame the timorous compliance of Mensurius and his party. He had taken his station, with a body of armed men, and

Appeal to
the civil
power.

precluded the pious zeal of their adherents from obtaining access to the prison of those who had been seized by the Government;¹ he had prevented, not merely the consolatory and inspiring visits of kinsmen and friends, but even the introduction of food and other comforts, in their state of starving destitution. The Carthaginian faction proceeded to elect Majorinus to the vacant see. Both parties appealed to the civil power; and Anulinus, the Prefect of Africa, who during the reign of Diocletian had seen the Christians dragged before his tribunal, and whose authority they then disclaimed with uncompromising unanimity, now saw them crowding in hostile factions to demand his interference in their domestic discords.

The cause was referred to the imperial decision of Constantine. At a later period, the Donatists, being worsted in the strife, bitterly reproached their adversaries with this appeal to the civil tribunal, "What have Christians to do with kings, or bishops with palaces?"² Their adversaries justly recriminated, that they had been as ready as themselves to request the intervention of the Government. Constantine delegated the judgment in their cause to the bishops of Gaul:³ but the first council was composed of a great majority of Italian bishops; and Rome, for the first time, witnessed a public trial of

Council of
Rome.

¹ Optatus, i. 22. ² Optatus, i. 22.

³ Augustine, writing when the episcopal authority stood on a level nearer to or even higher than the throne, asserts that Constantine did not dare to assume a cognizance over the election of a bishop. "Constantinus non ausus est de causâ, episcopi judicare." — Epist. cv. n. 8. Natural equity, as well as other reasons, would induce Constantine to delegate the affair to a Christian commission. The account of Optatus ascribes to Constantine speeches which it is difficult to reconcile with his public conduct as regards Christianity at this period of his life. The Council of Rome was held A.D. 313, 2d October.

The decrees of the Council of Rome and of Arles, with other documents on the subject, may be found in the fourth volume of Routh.

a Christian cause before an assembly of bishops, presided over by her prelate. The council was formed of the three Gallic bishops of Cologne, of Autun, and of Arles. The Italian bishops (we may conjecture that these were considered the more important sees, or were filled by the most influential prelates) were those of Milan, Cesena, Quintiano, Rimini, Florence, Pisa, Faenza, Capua, Benevento, Terracina, Præneste, Tres Tabernæ, Ostia, Ursinum (Urbium), Forum Claudii.

Cæcilian and Donatus appeared each at the head of ten bishops of his party. Both denounced their adversaries as guilty of the crime of tradition. The partisans of Donatus rested their appeal on the invalidity of an ordination by a bishop, Felix of Apathungia, who had been guilty of that delinquency. The party of Cæcilian accused almost the whole of the Numidian bishops, and Donatus himself, as involved in the same guilt. It was a wise and temperate policy in the Catholic party to attempt to cancel all embittering recollections of the days of trial and infirmity; to abolish all distinctions, which on one part led to pride, on the other to degradation; to reconcile, in those halcyon days of prosperity, the whole Christian world in one harmonious confederacy. This policy was that of the Government. At this early period of his Christianity, if he might yet be called a Christian, Constantine was little likely to enter into the narrow and exclusive principles of the Donatists. As emperor, Christianity was recommended to his favor by the harmonizing and tranquillizing influence which it exercised over a large body of the people. If it broke up into hostile feuds, it lost its value as an ally or an instrument of civil government. But it was exactly

this levelling of all religious distinctions, this liberal and comprehensive spirit, that would annihilate the less important differences, which struck at the vital principle of Donatism. They had confronted all the malice of the persecutor, they had disdained to compromise any principle, to concede the minutest point; and were they to abandon a superiority so hardly earned, and to acquiesce in the re-admission of all those who had forfeited their Christian privileges to the same rank? Were they not to exercise the high function of re-admission into the fold with proper severity? The decision of the council was favorable to the cause of Cæcilian. Donatus appealed to the emperor, who retained the heads of both parties in Italy, to allow time for the province to regain its quiet. In defiance of the emperor, both the leaders fled back to Africa, to set themselves at the head of their respective factions.

A.D. 314.
1st Aug.

The patient Constantine summoned a new, a more remote council at Arles. Cæcilian and the African bishops were cited to appear in that distant province; public vehicles were furnished for their conveyance at the emperor's charge; each bishop was attended by two of his inferior clergy, with three domestics. The Bishop of Arles presided in this council, which confirmed the judgment of that in Rome.

A second Donatus now appeared upon the scene, of more vigorous and more persevering character, greater ability, and with all the energy and self-confidence which enabled him to hold together the faction. The party now assumed the name of Donatists. On the death of Majorinus, Donatus succeeded to the dignity of Anti-Bishop of Carthage: the whole African province continued to espouse the quarrel; the authority of the Government, which had been invoked by both

parties, was scornfully rejected by that against which the award was made. Three times was the decision repeated in favor of the Catholic party, at Rome, at Arles, and at Milan; each time was ^{A.D. 316.} more strongly established the self-evident truth, which has been so late recognized by the Christian world,—the incompetency of any council to reconcile religious differences. The suffrages of the many cannot bind the consciences, or enlighten the minds, or even overcome the obstinacy, of the few. Neither party can yield without abandoning the very principles by which they have been constituted a party.

A commission issued to Ælius, prefect of the district, to examine the charge against Felix, Bishop of Apthunga, gave a favorable verdict.¹ An imperial commission of two delegates to Carthage ratified the decision of the former councils. At every turn, the Donatists protested against the equity of the decrees; they loudly complained of the unjust and partial influence exercised by Osius, Bishop of Cordova, over the mind of the emperor. At length the tardy indignation of the Government had recourse to violent measures. The Donatist bishops were driven into exile, their churches destroyed or sold, ^{Donatists persecuted.} and the property seized for the imperial revenue. The Donatists defied the armed interference, as they had disclaimed the authority, of the Government. This first development of the principles of Christian sectarianism was as stern, as inflexible, and as persevering, as in later times. The Donatists drew their narrow pale around their persecuted sect, and asserted themselves to be the only elect people of Christ; the only people whose clergy could claim an unbroken

¹ See the *Acta Purgationis Felicis*, in Routh, iv. 71.

apostolical succession, vitiated in all other communities of Christians by the inexpiable crime of tradition. Wherever they obtained possession of a church, they burned the altar, or, where wood was scarce, scraped off the infection of heretical communion; they melted the cups, and sold, it was said, the sanctified metal for profane, perhaps for Pagan, uses; they rebaptized all who joined their sect; they made the virgins renew their vows; they would not even permit the bodies of the Catholics to repose in peace, lest they should pollute the common cemeteries. The implacable faction darkened into a sanguinary feud. For the first time, human blood was shed in conflicts between followers of the Prince of Peace. Each party recriminated on the other; but neither denies the barbarous scenes of massacre and license which devastated the African cities. The Donatists boasted of their martyrs, and the cruelties of the Catholic party rest on their own admission: they deny not, they proudly vindicate their barbarities, — “Is the vengeance of God to be defrauded of its victims?”¹ and they appeal to the Old Testament to justify, by the examples of Moses, of Phineas, and of Elijah, the Christian duty of slaying by thousands the renegades or the unbelievers.

In vain Constantine at length published an edict of peace: the afflicted province was rent asunder till the close of his reign, and during that of his son, by this religious warfare. For, on the other hand, the barbarous fanaticism of the Circumcellions involved the Donatist party in

A.D. 321.

The Circumcellions.

¹ This damning passage is found in the work of the Catholic Optatus: “Quasi omnino in vindictam Dei nullus mereatur occidi.” Compare the whole chapter, iii. 6. An able writer (Mr. Bright, History of the Church) has objected to his statement. I adhere to it. There is a very strong description of the persecutions which they endured from the Catholics in the letter put in

the guilt of insurrection, and connected them with revolting atrocities, which they were accused of countenancing, of exciting, if not actually sanctioning by their presence. That which in the opulent cities, or the well-ordered communities, led to fierce and irreconcilable contention, grew up among the wild borderers on civilization into fanatical frenzy. Where Christianity has outstripped civilization, and has not had time to effect its beneficent and humanizing change, whether in the bosom of an old society or within the limits of savage life, it becomes, in times of violent excitement, instead of a pacific principle to assuage, a new element of ungovernable strife. The long peace which had been enjoyed by the province of Africa, and the flourishing corn-trade which it conducted as the granary of Rome and of the Italian provinces, had no doubt extended the pursuits of agriculture into the Numidian, Gætulian, and Mauritanian villages. The wild tribes had gradually become industrious peasants; and among them Christianity had found an open field for its exertions, and the increasing agricultural settlements had become Christian bishoprics. But the savage was yet only half-tamed; and no sooner had the flames of the Donatist conflict spread into these peaceful districts, than the genuine Christian was lost in the fiery marauding child of the desert. Maddened by oppression, wounded in his religious feelings by the expulsion and persecution of the bishops, from his old nature he resumed the fierce spirit of independence, the contempt for the laws of property, and the burning desire of revenge. Of his new religion he retained only the perverted

by the Donatist bishop Habet Deum in the conference held during the reign of Honorius. — Apud Dupin. No. 258, *in fine*

language, or rather that of the Old Testament, with an implacable hatred of all hostile sects; a stern ascetic continence, which perpetually broke out into paroxysms of unbridled licentiousness; and a fanatic passion for martyrdom, which assumed the acts of a kind of methodical insanity.

The Circumcellions commenced their ravages during the reign of Constantine, and continued in arms during that of his successor Constans. No sooner had the provincial authorities received instructions to reduce the province by force to religious unity, than the Circumcellions, who had at first confined their ravages to disorderly and hasty incursions, broke out into open revolt.¹ They defeated one body of the imperial troops, and killed Ursacius, the Roman general. They abandoned, by a simultaneous impulse, their agricultural pursuits; they proclaimed themselves the instruments of divine justice, and the protectors of the oppressed; they first asserted the wild theory of the civil equality of mankind, which has so often, in later periods of the world, become the animating principle of Christian fanaticism; they proclaimed the abolition of slavery; they thrust the proud and opulent master from his chariot, and made him walk by the side of his slave, who, in his turn, was placed in the stately vehicle; they cancelled all debts, and released the debtors; their most sanguinary acts were perpetrated in the name of religion, and Christian language was profaned by its association with their atrocities. Their leaders were the Captains of the Saints;² the battle-hymn, "Praise to God!"

¹ The Circumcellions were unacquainted with the Latin language, and are said to have spoken only the Punic of the country.

² Augustine asserts that they were led by their clergy. — v. xi. p. 575.

Their weapons were not swords, — for Christ had forbidden the use of the sword to Peter, — but huge and massy clubs, with which they beat their miserable victims to death.¹ They were bound by vows of the severest continence; but the African temperament, in its state of feverish excitement, was too strong for the bonds of fanatical restraint: the companies of the Saints not merely abused the privileges of war by the most licentious outrages on the females, but were attended by troops of drunken prostitutes whom they called their sacred virgins. But the most extraordinary development of their fanaticism was their rage for martyrdom. When they could Passion for martyrdom. not obtain it from the sword of the enemy, they inflicted it upon themselves. The ambitious martyr declared himself a candidate for the crown of glory: he then gave himself up to every kind of revelry, pampering, as it were, and fattening the victim for sacrifice. When he had wrought himself to the pitch of frenzy, he rushed out; and, with a sword in one hand and money in the other, he threatened death and offered reward to the first comer who would satisfy his eager longings for the glorious crown. They leaped from precipices; they went into the Pagan temples to provoke the vengeance of the worshippers.

Such are the excesses to which Christianity is constantly liable, as the religion of a savage and uncivilized people; but, on the other hand, it must be laid down as a political axiom equally universal, that this fanaticism rarely bursts out into disorders dan-

¹ The Donatists anticipated our Puritans in those strange religious names which they assumed. *Habet Deum* appears among the Donatist bishops in a conference held with the Catholics at Carthage, A.D. 411. See the report of the conference in the *Donatistan Monumenta* collected by Dupin, at the end of his edition of *Optatus*.

gerous to society, unless goaded and maddened by persecution.¹

Donatism was the fatal schism of one province of Christendom: the few communities formed on these rigid principles in Spain and in Rome died away in neglect; but, however diminished its influence, it distracted the African province for three centuries, and was only finally extirpated with Christianity itself, by the all-absorbing progress of Mohammedanism. At one time, Constantine resorted to milder measures, and issued an edict of toleration. But, in the reign of Constans, the persecution was renewed with more unrelenting severity. Two imperial officers, Paul and Macurius, were sent to reduce the province to religious unity. The Circumcellions encountered them with obstinate valor, but were totally defeated in the sanguinary battle of Bagnia. In the later reigns, when the laws against heresy became more frequent and severe, the Donatists were named with marked reprobation in the condemnatory edicts. Yet, in the time of Honorius, they boasted, in a conference with the Catholics, that they equally divided at least the province of Numidia, and that the Catholics only obtained a majority of bishops by the unfair means of subdividing the sees. This conference was held in the vain, though then it might not appear ungrounded, hope of re-uniting the great body of the Donatists with the Catholic communion. The Donatists, says Gibbon, with his usual sarcasm and more than his usual truth, had received a practical lesson on the consequences of their own principles. A small sect, the Maximinians, had been formed within their body, who asserted

¹ Compare the persecution at the end of Dupin's edition of Optatus. Tillemont, vi. 147.

themselves to be the only genuine Church of God, denied the efficacy of the sacraments, disclaimed the apostolic power of the clergy, and rigidly appropriated to their own narrow sect the merits of Christ and the hopes of salvation. But neither this fatal warning, nor the eloquence of St. Augustine, wrought much effect on the Puritans of Africa: they still obstinately denied the legality of Cæcilian's ordination; still treated their adversaries as the dastardly traditors of the Sacred Writings; still dwelt apart in the unquestioning conviction that they were the sole subjects of the kingdom of Heaven; that to them alone belonged the privilege of immortality through Christ, while the rest of the world, the unworthy followers of Christ, not less than the blind and unconverted Heathen, were perishing in their outcast and desperate state of condemnation.¹

¹ Donatists are mentioned at the end of the sixth century (see Gregory the Great, Epist. i. 72-75, ii. 33), and are still powerful enough to eject the Catholics from their churches. — Greg. Epist. iii. 32-35, v. 63.

CHAPTER II.

Constantine becomes sole Emperor.

By the victory over Maxentius, Constantine had become master of half the Roman world. The East still Pagan. Christianity, if it had not contributed to the success, shared the advantage, of the triumph. By the edict of Milan, the Christians had resumed all their former rights as citizens, their churches were re-opened, their public services recommenced, and their silent work of aggression on the hostile Paganism began again under the most promising auspices. The equal favor with which they were beheld by the sovereign appeared both to their enemies and to themselves an open declaration on their side. The public acts, the laws and the medals of Constantine,¹ show how the lofty eclectic indifferentism of the emperor, which extended impartial protection over all the conflicting faiths, or attempted to mingle together their least inharmonious elements, gradually but slowly gave place to the progressive influence of Christianity. Christian bishops appeared as regular attendants upon the court; the internal dissensions of Christianity be-

¹ Eckhel supposes that the Heathen symbols disappeared from the coins of Constantine after his victory over Licinius. — *Doctr. Num. in Constant.*

I may add here another observation of this great authority on such subjects: "*Excute universam Constantini monetam, nunquam in eâ aut Christi imaginem aut Constantini effigiem cruce insignem reperies. . . . In nonnullis jam monogramma Christi P P inseritur labare aut vexillo, jam in aræ nummi solitariè excubat, jam aliis, ut patebit, comparet modis.*"

came affairs of state. The Pagan party saw, with increasing apprehension for their own authority and the fate of Rome, the period of the secular games, on the due celebration of which depended the duration of the Roman sovereignty, pass away unhonored.¹ It was an extraordinary change in the constitution of the Western world, when the laws ^{A.D. 315.} of the empire issued from the court of Treves, and Italy and Africa awaited the changes in their civil and religious constitution, from the seat of government on the barbarous German frontier. The munificent grant of Constantine for the restoration of the African churches had appeared to commit him in favor of the Christian party, and had perhaps indirectly contributed to inflame the dissensions in that province.

A new law recognized the clerical order as a distinct and privileged class. It exempted them from the onerous municipal offices, which had begun to press heavily upon the more opulent inhabitants of the towns. It is the surest sign of misgovernment, when the higher classes shrink from the posts of honor and of trust. During the more flourishing days of the empire, the decurionate, the chief municipal dignity, had been the great object of provincial ambition. The decurions formed the senates of the towns; they supplied the magistrates from their body, and had the right of electing them.²

Under the new financial system introduced by Diocletian, the decurions were made responsible for the full amount of taxation imposed by the cataster, or assessment on the town and district. As the payment

¹ Zosimus, l. ii. c. 1.

² Savigny, *Römische Recht*, i. 18. Compare the whole book of the Theodosian Code, *De Decurionibus*. Persons concealed their property to escape serving the public offices. — *Cod. Theod.* iii. 1-8.

became more burdensome or difficult, the tenants, or even the proprietors, either became insolvent or fled their country. But the inexorable revenue still exacted from the decurions the whole sum assessed on their town or district. The office itself grew into disrepute, and the law was obliged to force that upon the reluctant citizen of wealth or character which had before been an object of eager emulation and competition.¹ The Christians obtained the exemption of their ecclesiastical order from these civil offices. The exemption was grounded on the just plea of its incompatibility with their religious duties.² The emperor declared, in a letter to Cæcilian, Bishop of Carthage, that the Christian priesthood ought not to be withdrawn from the worship of God, which is the principal source of the prosperity of the empire. The effect of this immunity shows the oppressed and disorganized state of society.³ Numbers of persons, in order to secure this exemption, rushed at once into the clerical order of the Christians; and this manifest abuse demanded an immediate modification of the law. None were to be admitted into the sacred order except on the vacancy of a religious charge, and then those only whose poverty exempted them from the municipal functions.⁴ Those whose property imposed upon them the duty of the decu-

A.D. 320.
Exemption
from the
Decurionate.

¹ See two dissertations of Savigny on the taxation of the empire, in the Transactions of the Berlin Academy, and translated in the Cambridge Classical Researches.

² The officers of the royal household, and their descendants, had the same exemption, which was likewise extended to the Jewish archisynagogi, or elders. — Le Beau, 165. Cod. Theodos. xvi. 8, 2.

The priests and the Flamines, with the Decurions, were exempt from certain inferior offices. — Cod. Theodos. xii. v. 2.

³ See the various laws on this subject, Codex Theodos. xvi. 2, 3, 6–11.

⁴ Cod. Theodos. xvi. 2, 17, 19.

ronate were ordered to abandon their religious profession. Such was the despotic power of the sovereign, to which the Christian Church still submitted, either on the principle of passive obedience, or in gratitude for the protection of the civil authority. The legislator interfered without scruple in the domestic administration of the Christian community, and the Christians received the imperial edicts in silent submission. The appointment of a Christian, the celebrated Lactantius, to superintend the education of Crispin, the eldest son of the emperor, was at once a most decisive and most influential step towards the public declaration of Christianity as the religion of the imperial family. Another important law, the groundwork of the vast property obtained by the Church, gave it the fullest power to receive the bequests of the pious. Their right of holding property had been admitted apparently by Alexander Severus, annulled by Diocletian, and was now conceded in the most explicit terms by Constantine.¹

But half the world remained still disunited from the dominion of Constantine and of Christianity. The first war with Licinius had been closed by the battles of Cibalæ and Mardia, and a new partition of the empire. It was succeeded by a hollow and treacherous peace of nine years.² The favor shown by Constantine to his Christian subjects seems to have thrown Licinius upon the opposite interest.

¹ "Habeat unusquisque licentiam, sanctissimo Catholicæ venerabilique concilio, decedens bonorum, quod placet, relinquere. Non sint cassa judicia. Nihil est, quod magis hominibus debetur, quam ut supremæ voluntatis, postquam aliud jam velle non possint, liber sit status, et licens, quod iterum non redit, imperium." — C. Th. xvi. 2, 4, De Episcopis. This law is assigned to the year 321.

² 314 to 323.

The edict of Milan had been issued in the joint names of the two emperors. In his conflict with Maximin, Licinius had avenged the oppressions of Christianity on their most relentless adversary. But when the crisis approached which was to decide the fate of the whole empire, as Constantine had adopted every means of securing their cordial support, so Licinius repelled the allegiance of his Christian subjects by disfavor, by mistrust, by expulsion from offices of honor, by open persecution, till, in the language of the ecclesiastical historian, the world was divided into two regions, those of day and of night.¹ The vices as well as the policy of Licinius might disincline him to endure the importunate presence of the Christian bishops in his court; but he might disguise his hostile disposition to the churchmen under his declared dislike of eunuchs and of courtiers,² — the vermin, as he called them, of the palace. The stern avarice of Licinius would be contrasted to his disadvantage with the profuse liberality of Constantine; his looser debaucheries, with the severer morals of the Western emperor. Licinius proceeded to purge his household troops of those whose inclination to his rival he might, not without reason, mistrust: none were permitted to retain their rank who refused to sacrifice. He prohibited the synods of the clergy, which he naturally apprehended might degenerate into conspiracies in favor of his rival. He confined the bishops to the care of their own dioceses.³ He affected, in his care for the public morals, to prohibit the pro-

Licinius becomes more decidedly Pagan.

¹ Euseb., *Vita Constant.* i. 49.

² "Spadonum et Aulicorum omnium vehemens domitor, tineas soricesque palatii eos appellans." — *Aur. Vict. Epit.*

³ *Vit. Constant.* i. 41.

miscuous worship of men and women in the churches;¹ and insulted the sanctity of the Christian worship, by commanding that it should be celebrated in the open air. The edict prohibiting all access to the prisons, though a strong and unwilling testimony to the charitable exertions of the Christians, and by their writers represented as an act of wanton and unexampled inhumanity, was caused probably by a jealous policy, rather than by wanton cruelty of temper. It is quite clear, that the prayers of the Christians, perhaps more worldly weapons, were armed in favor of Constantine. The Eastern churches would be jealous of their happier Western brethren, and naturally would be eager to bask in the equal sunshine of imperial favor. At length, either fearing the effect of their prayers with the Deity whom they addressed,² or their influence in alienating the minds of their votaries from his own cause to that of him who, in the East, was considered the champion of the Christian cause, Licinius commanded the Christian churches in Pontus to be closed; he destroyed some of them, perhaps for defiance of his edicts. Some acts of persecution took place: the Christians fled again into the country, and began to conceal themselves in the woods and caves. Many instances of violence, some of martyrdom, occurred;³

¹ Vit. Constant. Women were to be instructed by the deaconesses alone.
— Vit. Const. i. 53.

² Συντελείσθαι γὰρ οὐκ ἤγειτο ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ τὰς εὐχὰς, συνειδῶτι φαίλω τοῦτο λογιζόμενος, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τοῦ θεοφιλοῦς βασιλέως πάντα πράττειν ἡμᾶς καὶ τὸν θεὸν ἡλεούσθαι πέπειστο. — Euseb. x. 8.

³ Sozomen (H. E. i. 7) asserts that many of the clergy, as well as bishops, were martyred. Dodwell, however, observes (De Paucitate Martyrum, 91), "Caveant fabulatores ne quos alios sub Licinio martyres faciant præterquam episcopos." Compare Ruinart. There is great difficulty about Basileus, Bishop of Amasa. He is generally reckoned by the Greek writers as a martyr (see Pagi ad an. 316, n. x.); but he is expressly stated by Philostor-

particularly in Pontus. There was a wide-spread apprehension that a new and general persecution was about to break out, when the emperor of the West moved, in the language of the Christian historian, to rescue the whole of mankind from the tyranny of one.¹

Whether or not, in fact, Licinius avowed the imminent war to be a strife for mastery between the two religions, the decisive struggle between the ancient gods of Rome and the new divinity of the Christians ;² whether he actually led the chief officers and his most eminent political partisans into a beautiful consecrated grove, crowded with the images of the gods ; and appealed, by the light of blazing torches, and amid the smoke of sacrifice, to the gods of their ancestors against his atheistic adversaries, the followers of a foreign and unknown deity, whose ignominious sign was displayed in the van of their armies, — nevertheless, the propagation of such stories shows how completely, according to their own sentiments, the interests of Christianity were identified with the cause of Constantine.³ On both sides were again marshalled all the supernatural terrors which religious hope or superstitious awe could summon. Diviners, soothsayers, and Egyptian magicians, animated the troops of Licinius.⁴ The Christians in the army of Constantine attributed all his success to the prayers of the pious bishops who accompanied his army, and especially to the holy

gius (lib. i.), confirmed by Athanasius (Orat. 1, contra Arianos), to have been present at the Council of Nicæa some years afterwards.

¹ Vit. Const. ii. 5.

² Ὑπαχθεὶς τοῖν ὑπισχνουμένοις ἀντὶ κρατήσεων, εἰς ἐλλήνισμον ἐτρέπη — Sozomen, i. 7.

Sacrifices and divinations were resorted to, and promised to Licinius universal empire.

³ Vit. Constant. ii. 4.

⁴ Euseb., Vit. Constant. i. 49.

Labarum, whose bearer passed unhurt among showers of fatal javelins.¹

The battle of Hadrianople, and the naval victory of Crispus, decided the fate of the world, and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire. The death of Licinius re-united the whole Roman world under the sceptre of Constantine.

Eusebius ascribes to Constantine, during this battle, an act of Christian mercy, at least as unusual as the appearance of the banner of the cross at the head of the Roman army. He issued orders to spare the lives of his enemies, and offered rewards for all captives brought in alive. Even if this be not strictly true, its exaggeration or invention, or even its relation as a praiseworthy act, shows the new spirit which was working in the mind of man.²

Among the first acts of the sole emperor of the world were the repeal of all the edicts of Licinius against the Christians; the release of all prisoners from the dungeon or the mine, or the servile and humiliating occupations to which some had been contemptuously condemned in the manufactories conducted by women; the recall of all the exiles; the restoration of all who had been deprived of their rank in the army, or in the civil service; the restitution of all property of which they had been despoiled,—that of the martyrs to the legal heirs, where there were no heirs, to the Church. The property of the churches was not only restored, but the power to receive donations in land, already granted to the Western churches,

¹ Eusebius declares that he heard this from the lips of Constantine himself. One man, who in his panic gave up the cross to another, was immediately transfixd in his flight. No one actually around the cross was wounded.

² Vit. Const. ii. 13

was extended to the Eastern. The emperor himself set the example of giving back all that had been confiscated to the state.

Constantine issued two edicts, recounting all these exemptions, restitutions, and privileges; one addressed to the churches, the other to the cities of the East: the latter alone is extant. Its tone might certainly indicate that Constantine considered the contest with Licinius as, in some degree, a war of religion. His own triumph and the fate of his enemies are adduced as unanswerable evidences to the superiority of that God whose followers had been so cruelly persecuted. The restoration of the Christians to all their property and immunities was an act, not merely of justice and humanity, but of gratitude to the Deity.

But Constantine now appeared more openly to the whole world as the head of the Christian community. He sat, not in the Roman senate deliberating on the affairs of the empire, but presiding in a council of

A.D. 325.

Christian bishops, summoned from all parts of the world, to decide, as of infinite importance to the Roman empire, a contested point of the Christian faith. The council was held at Nicæa, one of the most ancient of the Eastern cities. The transactions of the council, the questions which were agitated before it, and the decrees which it issued, will be postponed for the present, in order that this important controversy, which so long divided Christianity, may best be related in a continuous narrative: we pass to the following year.

Conduct of
Constantine
to his
enemies

Up to this period, Christianity had seen much to admire, and little that it would venture to disapprove, in the public acts or in the domestic character of Constantine. His of-

fences against the humanity of the Gospel would find palliation, or rather vindication and approval, in a warrior and a sovereign. The age was not yet so fully leavened with Christianity as to condemn the barbarity of that Roman pride which exposed without scruple the brave captive chieftains of the German tribes in the amphitheatre. Again, after the triumph of Constantine over Maxentius, this bloody spectacle had been renewed at Treves, on a new victory of Constantine over the *Barbarians*. The extirpation of the family of a competitor for the empire would pass as the usual, perhaps the necessary, policy of the times. The public hatred would applaud the death of the voluptuous Maxentius, and that of his family would be the inevitable consequences of his guilt. Licinius had provoked his own fate by resistance to the will of God and his persecution of the religion of Christ. Nor was the fall of Licinius followed by any general proscription: his son lived for a few years to be the undistinguished victim of a sentence which involved others in whom the public mind took far deeper interest. Licinius himself was permitted to live a short time at Thessalonica.¹ It is said by some that his life was guaranteed by a solemn oath, and that he was permitted to partake of the hospitality of the conqueror.² Yet his death, though the brother-in-law of Constantine, was but an expected event.³ The tragedy

¹ Le Beau (Hist. du Bas Empire, i. 220) recites with great fairness the varying accounts of the death of Licinius, and the motives which are said to have prompted it. But he proceeds to infer that Licinius *must* have been guilty of some new crime, to induce Constantine to violate his solemn oath.

² "Contra religionem sacramenti Thessalonicae privatus occisus est." — Eutrop. lib. x.

³ Eusebius says that he was put to death by the laws of war, and openly approves of his execution and that of the other enemies of God. Νόμιμον πόλεμον διακρίνας τῇ προεπούσῃ παρεδίδον τιμωρίαν . . . καὶ ἀπόλλυντι,

which took place in the family of Constantine betrayed to the surprised and anxious world, that, if his outward demeanor showed respect or veneration for Christianity, its milder doctrines had made little impression on the unsoftened Paganism of his heart.

Crispus, the son of Constantine by Minervina, his first wife, was a youth of high and brilliant promise. In his early years his education had been intrusted to the celebrated Lactantius, and there is reason to suppose that he was imbued by his eloquent preceptor with the Christian doctrines; but the gentler sentiments instilled by the new faith had by no means unnerved the vigor or tamed the martial activity of youth. Had he been content with the calmer and more retiring virtues of the Christian, without displaying the dangerous qualifications of a warrior and a statesman, he might have escaped the fatal jealousy of his father, and the arts which were no doubt employed for his ruin. In his campaign against the Barbarians, Crispus had shown himself a worthy son of Constantine; and his naval victory over the fleet of Licinius had completed the conquest of the empire. The conqueror of Maxentius and of Licinius, the undisputed master of the Roman world, might have been expected to stand superior to that common failing of weak monarchs, — a jealous dread of the heir to their throne. The unworthy fears of Constantine were betrayed by an edict inconsistent with the early promise of his reign. He had endeavored, soon after his accession, to repress the odious crime of delation: a rescript now appeared, inviting,

τὴν προσήκουσαν ὑπέχοντες δίκην, οἱ τῆς θεομαχίας σύμβουλοι. How singularly does this contrast with the passage above! — See p. 323 (Vit. Const. ii. 13), — bigotry and mercy advancing hand in hand; the sterner creed overpowering the Gospel.

by large reward and liberal promise of favor, those informations which he had before nobly disdained; and this edict seemed to betray the apprehensions of the Government, that some widely ramified and darkly organized conspiracy was afoot. But, if such conspiracy existed, the Government refused, by the secrecy of its own proceedings, to enlighten the public mind.

Rome itself, and the whole Roman world, heard with horror and amazement, that in the midst of the solemn festival, which was celebrating with the utmost splendor the twentieth year of the emperor's reign, his eldest son had been suddenly seized, and, either without trial or after a hurried examination, had been transported to the shore of Istria, and had perished by an obscure death.¹ Nor did Crispus fall alone; the young Licinius, the nephew of Constantine, who had been spared after his father's death and vainly honored with the title of Cæsar, shared his fate. The sword of justice or of cruelty, once let loose, raged against those who were suspected as partisans of the dangerous Crispus, or as implicated in the wide-spread conspiracy, till the bold satire of an eminent officer of state did not scruple, in some lines privately circulated, to compare the splendid but bloody times with those of Nero.²

Death of
Crispus.
April,
A.D. 326.

But this was only the first act of the domestic trage-

¹ Vict. Epit. in Constantino. Eutrop. lib. x. Zosimus, ii. c. 29. Sidonius, v. Epist. 8. Of the ecclesiastical historians, Philostorgius (lib. ii. 4) attributed the death of Crispus to the arts of his stepmother. He adds a strange story, that Constantine was poisoned by his brothers in revenge for the death of Crispus. Sozomen, while he refutes the notion of the connection of the death of Crispus with the conversion of Constantine, admits the fact, l. i. c. 5.

² The Consul Albinus, —

Saturni aurea sæcla quis requireret?
Sunt hæc gemmea sed Neroniana.

Sid. Apoll. v. 8.

dy: the death of the emperor's wife Fausta, the part-
ner of twenty years of wedlock, the mother of
Death of
Fausta. his three surviving sons, increased the general horror. She was suffocated in a bath, which had been heated to an insupportable degree of temperature. Many rumors were propagated throughout the empire concerning this dark transaction, of which the real secret was no doubt concealed, if not in the bosom, within the palace, of Constantine. The awful crimes which had thrilled the scene of ancient tragedy were said to have polluted the imperial chamber. The guilty stepmother had either, like Phædra, revenged the insensibility of the youthful Crispus by an accusation of incestuous violence, or the crime, actually perpetrated, had involved them both in the common guilt and ruin. In accordance with the former story, the miserable Constantine had discovered too late the machinations which had stained his hand with the blood of a guiltless son: in the agony of his remorse he had fasted forty days; he had abstained from the use of the bath; he had proclaimed his own guilty precipitancy, and the innocence of his son, by raising a golden statue of the murdered Crispus, with the simple but emphatic inscription, "To my unfortunate son." The Christian mother of Constantine, Helena, had been the principal agent in the detection of the wicked Fausta: it was added, that, besides her unnatural passion for her step-son, she was found to have demeaned herself to the embraces of a slave.

It is dangerous to attempt to reconcile with probability these extraordinary events, which so often surpass, in the strange reality of their circumstances, the wildest fictions. But, according to the ordinary course of things, Crispus would appear the victim of political

rather than of domestic jealousy. The innocent Licinius might be an object of suspicion, as implicated in a conspiracy against the power, but not against the honor, of Constantine. The removal of Crispus opened the succession of the throne to the sons of Fausta. The passion of maternal ambition is much more consistent with human nature than the incestuous love of a stepmother, advanced in life and with many children, towards her husband's son. The guilt of compassing the death of Crispus, whether by the atrocious accusations of a Phædra or by the more vulgar arts of common court intrigue, might come to light at a later period; and the indignation of the emperor at having been deluded into the execution of a gallant and blameless son, the desire of palliating to the world and to his own conscience his own criminal and precipitate weakness by the most unrelenting revenge on the subtlety with which he had been circumvented, might madden him to a second act of relentless barbarity.

But, at all events, the unanimous consent of the Pagan and most of the Christian authorities, Pagan account of this event as well as the expressive silence of Eusebius, indicates the unfavorable impression made on the public mind by these household barbarities. But the most remarkable circumstance is the advantage which was taken of this event by the Pagan party to throw a dark shade over the conversion of Constantine to the Christian religion. Zosimus has preserved this report; but there is good reason for supposing that it was a rumor, eagerly propagated at the time by the more desponding votaries of Paganism.² In the deep

¹ Gibbon has thrown doubts on the actual death of Fausta.—Vol. iii p. 110.

² See Heyne's note on this passage of Zosimus.

agony of remorse, Constantine eagerly inquired of the ministers of the ancient religions whether their lustrations could purify the soul from the blood of a son. The unaccommodating priesthood acknowledged the inefficacy of their rites in a case of such inexpiable atrocity,¹ and Constantine remained to struggle with the unappeased and unatoned horrors of conscience. An Egyptian, on his journey from Spain, passed through Rome, and, being admitted to the intimacy of some of the females about the court, explained to the emperor that the religion of Christ possessed the power of cleansing the soul from all sin. From that time, Constantine placed himself entirely in the hands of the Christians, and abandoned altogether the sacred rites of his ancestors.

If Constantine at this time had been long an avowed and sincere Christian, this story falls to the ground; but if, according to my view, there was still something of ambiguity in the favor shown by Constantine to Christianity, if it still had something rather of the sagacious statesman than of the serious proselyte, there may be some slight groundwork of truth in this fiction. Constantine may have relieved a large por-

¹ According to Sozomen, whose narrative, as Heyne observes (note on Zosimus, p. 552), proves that this story was not the invention of Zosimus, but rather the version of the event current in the Pagan world, it was not a Pagan priest, but a Platonic philosopher, named Sopater, who thus denied the efficacy of any rite or ceremony to wash the soul clean from filial blood. It is true that neither the legal ceremonial of Paganism nor the principles of the later Platonism could afford any hope or pardon to the murderer. Julian, speaking of Constantine (in Cæsar), insinuates the facility with which Christianity admitted the *μαλφρονος*, as well as other atrocious delinquents, to the divine forgiveness.

The bitterness with which the Pagan party judged of the measures of Constantine is shown in the turn which Zosimus gives to his edict discouraging divination: "Having availed himself of the advantages of divination, which had predicted his own splendid successes, he was jealous lest the prophetic art should be equally prodigal of its glorious promises to others."

tion of his subjects from grievous oppression, and restored their plundered property; he may have made munificent donations for the maintenance of their ceremonial; he may have permitted the famous Labarum to exalt the courage of his Christian soldiery; he may have admitted their representatives to his court, endeavored to allay their fierce feuds in Africa, and sanctioned by his presence the meeting of the Council of Nicæa to decide on the new controversy which began to distract the Christian world; he may have proclaimed himself, in short, the worshipper of the Christians' God, whose favorites seemed likewise to be those of fortune, and whose enemies were devoted to ignominy and disaster (such is his constant language):¹ but of the real character and the profounder truths of the religion he may still have been entirely, or perhaps in some degree disdainfully, ignorant. The lofty indifferentism of the emperor predominated over the obedience of the convert towards the new faith.

But it was now the *man*, abased by remorse, by the terrors of conscience, it may be by superstitious horrors, who sought refuge against the divine Nemesis, the avenging Furies, which haunted his troubled spirit. It would be the duty as well as the interest of an influential Christian to seize on the mind of the royal proselyte, and, while it was thus prostrate in its weakness, to enforce more strongly the *personal* sense of religion upon the afflicted soul. And if the emperor was understood to have derived the slightest consolation

¹ It is remarkable in all the proclamations and documents which Eusebius assigns to Constantine, some even written by his own hand, how almost exclusively he dwells on this worldly superiority of the God adored by the Christians over those of the Heathen, and the visible *temporal* advantages which attend on the worship of Christianity. His own victory and the disasters of his enemies are his conclusive evidences of Christianity.

under this heavy burden of conscious guilt from the doctrines of Christianity ; if his remorse and despair were allayed or assuaged, nothing was more likely than that Paganism, which constantly charged Christianity with receiving the lowest and most depraved of man kind among its proselytes, should affect to assume the tone of superior moral dignity, to compare its more uncompromising moral austerity with the easier terms on which Christianity *appeared* to receive the repentant sinner. In the bitterness of wounded pride and interest at the loss of an imperial worshipper, it would revenge itself by ascribing his change exclusively to the worst hour of his life, and to the least exalted motive. It is a greater difficulty, that, subsequent to this period, the mind of Constantine appears to have relapsed in some degree to its imperfectly unpaganized Christianity. His conduct became ambiguous as before, floating between a decided bias in favor of Christianity, and an apparent design to harmonize with it some of the less offensive parts of Heathenism. Yet it is by no means beyond the common inconsistency of human nature, that, with the garb and attitude, Constantine should throw off the submission, of a penitent. His mind, released from its burden, might resume its ancient vigor, and assert its haughty superiority over the religious as well as over the civil allegiance of his subjects. A new object of ambition was dawning on his mind ; a new and absorbing impulse was given to all his thoughts, — the foundation of the second Rome, the new imperial city on the Bosphorus.

Nor was this sole and engrossing object altogether unconnected with the sentiments which arose out of this dark transaction. Rome had become hateful to Constantine ; for, whether on this point identifying

herself with the Pagan feeling, and taunting the crime of the Christian with partial acrimony, or presuming the design of Constantine to reduce her to the second city of the empire, Rome assumed the unwonted liberty of insulting the emperor. The pasquinade which compared his days to those of Nero was affixed to the gates of the palace; and so galling was the insolence of the populace, that the emperor is reported to have consulted his brothers on the expediency of calling out his guards for a general massacre. Milder counsels prevailed; and Constantine took the more tardy, but more deep-felt, revenge of transferring the seat of empire from the banks of the Tiber to the shores of the Bosphorus.

CHAPTER III.

Foundation of Constantinople.

THE foundation of Constantinople marks one of the great periods of change in the annals of the world. Both its immediate¹ and its remoter connection with the history of Christianity are among those results which contributed to its influence on the destinies of mankind. The removal of the seat of empire from Rome might, indeed, at first appear to strengthen the decaying cause of Paganism. The senate became the sanctuary—the aristocracy of Rome, in general, the unshaken adherents—of the ancient religion. But its more remote and eventual consequences were favorable to the consolidation and energy of the Christian power in the West. The absence of a secular competitor allowed the papal authority to grow up and to develop its secret strength. By the side of the imperial power, perpetually contrasted with the pomp and majesty of the throne, constantly repressed in his slow but steady advancement to supremacy or obliged to contest every point with a domestic antagonist, the pope would hardly have gained more political importance than the Patriarch of Constantinople. The extinction of the Western empire, which indeed had long held its

¹ Constantine seized the property of some of the temples, for the expense of building Constantinople, but did not change the established worship; so says Libanius.

Τῆς κατὰ νόμους δὲ θεραπείας ἐκίνησεν οὐδὲ ἐν. — Vol. ii. p. 162.

court in Milan or Ravenna rather than in the ancient capital, its revival only beyond the Alps, left all the awe which attached to the old Roman name, or which followed the possession of the imperial city, to gather round the tiara of the pontiff. In any other city, the pope would in vain have asserted his descent from St. Peter: the long habit of connecting together the name of Rome with supreme dominion, silently co-operated in establishing the spiritual despotism of the Papal See.

Even in its more immediate influence, the rise of Constantinople was favorable to the progress of Christianity. It removed the seat of government from the presence of those awful temples to which ages of glory had attached an inalienable sanctity, and with which the piety of all the greater days of the republic had associated the supreme dominion and the majesty of Rome. It broke the last link which combined the pontifical and the imperial character. The emperor of Constantinople, even if he had remained a Pagan, would have lost that power which was obtained over men's minds by his appearing in the chief place in all the religious pomps and processions, some of which were as old as Rome itself. The senate, and even the people, might be transferred to the new city: the deities of Rome clung to their native home, and would have refused to abandon their ancient seats of honor and worship.

Constantinople arose, if not a Christian, certainly not a Pagan city. The new capital of the world had no ancient deities, whose worship was inseparably connected with her more majestic buildings and solemn customs. The temples of old Byzantium had fallen with the rest of the

favorable to
Christianity.

Constanti-
nople a
Christian
city.

public edifices, when Severus, in his vengeance, razed the rebellious city to the ground. Byzantium had resumed sufficient strength and importance to resist a siege by Constantine himself in the earlier part of his reign; and some temples had re-appeared during the reconstruction of the city.¹ The fanes of the Sun, of the Moon, and of Aphrodite, were permitted to stand in the Acropolis, though deprived of their revenues.² That of Castor and Pollux formed part of the Hippodrome, and the statues of those deities who presided over the games stood undisturbed till the reign of Theodosius the Younger.³

Once determined to found a rival Rome on the shores of the Bosphorus, the ambition of Constantine was absorbed by this great object. No expense was spared to raise a city worthy of the seat of empire; no art or influence, to collect inhabitants worthy of such a city. Policy forbade any measure which would alienate the minds of any class or order who might add to the splendor or swell the population of Byzantium, and policy was the ruling principle of Constantine in the conduct of the whole transaction. It was the emperor whose pride was now pledged to the accomplishment of his scheme with that magnificence which became the second founder of the empire, rather than the exclusive patron of one religious division of his subjects. Constantinople was not only to bear the name, it was to wear an exact resemblance, of the elder Rome. The habitations of

¹ There is a long list of these temples in V. Hammer's *Constantinopel und die Bosphorus*, i. p. 189, &c. Many of them are named in Gyllius; but it does not seem clear at what period they ceased to exist. The *Paschal Chronicle*, referred to by V. Hammer, says nothing of their conversion into churches by Constantine.

² Malala, *Constantinus*, x. 4. ³ Zosimus, ii. 31.

men, and the public buildings for business, for convenience, for amusement, or for splendor, demanded the first care of the founder. The imperial palace arose, in its dimensions and magnificence equal to that in the older city. The skill of the architect was lavished on the patrician mansions, which were so faithfully to represent to the nobles, who obeyed the imperial invitation, the dwellings of their ancestors in the ancient Capitol, that their wondering eyes could scarcely believe their removal: their Penates might seem to have followed them.¹ The senate-house, the Augusteum, was prepared for their counsels. For the mass of the people, markets and fountains and aqueducts, theatres and hippodromes, porticos, basilicæ, and forums, rose with the rapidity of enchantment. One class of buildings alone was wanting. If some temples were allowed to stand, it is clear that no new sacred edifices were erected to excite and gratify the religious feelings of the Pagan party; and the building of the few churches which are ascribed to the pious munificence of Constantine, seems slowly to have followed the extraordinary celerity with which the city was crowded with civil edifices.² A century

¹ Sozomen, ii. 3. In the next reign, however, Themistius admits the reluctance of the senators to remove: *προτοῦ μὲν ὑπὸ ἀνάγκης ἐτιμᾶτο ἡ γερουσία, καὶ ἡ τιμὴ τιμωρίας ἐδόκει μηδ' οἷον διαφέρειν.* — Orat. Protrep. p. 57.

² Of the churches built by Constantine, one was dedicated to S. Sophia (the supreme Wisdom); the other to Eirene, Peace: a philosophic Pagan might have admitted the propriety of dedicating temples to each of these abstract names. The consecrating to individual saints was of a later period. — Soz. ii. 3. The ancient Temple of Peace, which afterwards formed part of the Santa Sophia, was appropriately transformed into a Christian church. The Church of the Twelve Apostles appears, from Eusebius (Vit. Const. iv. 58), to have been built in the last year of Constantine's reign and of his life, as a burial place for himself and his family. Sozomen, indeed, says that Constantine embellished the city *πολλοῖς καὶ μεγίστοις ἐκκληρίοις οἴκοις.*

after,—a century during which Christianity had been recognized as the religion of the empire,—the metropolis contained only fourteen churches, one for each of its wards or divisions. Yet Constantine by no means neglected those measures which might connect the new city with the religious feelings of mankind. Heaven inspired, commanded, sanctified, the foundation of the second Rome. The ancient ritual of Roman Paganism contained a solemn ceremony, which dedicated a new city to the protection of the Deity.

An imperial edict announced to the world, that Constantine, by the command of God, had founded the eternal city.¹ When the emperor walked, with a spear in his hand, in the front of the stately procession which was to trace the boundaries of Constantinople, the attendants followed in wonder his still-advancing footsteps, which seemed as if they never would reach the appointed limit. One of them, at length, humbly inquired how much farther he proposed to advance. “When he that goes before me,” replied the emperor, “shall stop.” But, however the Deity might have intimated his injunctions to commence the work, or whatever the nature of the invisible guide which, as he declared, thus directed his steps, this vague appeal to the Deity would impress with the same respect all his subjects, and by its impartial ambiguity offend none. In earlier times the Pagans would have bowed down in homage before this manifestation of the nameless tutelary deity of the new city; at the present period, they had become familiarized, as it were, with the concentration of

¹ On the old ceremony of founding a city, see Hartung, *Religion der Römer*, i. 114.

Olympus into one Supreme Being.¹ The Christians would, of course, assert the exclusive right of the one true God to this appellation, and attribute to his inspiration and guidance every important act of the Christian emperor.²

But, if splendid temples were not erected to the decaying deities of Paganism, their images were set up, mingled indeed with other noble works of art, in all the public places of Constantinople. If the inhabitants were not encouraged, at least they were not forbidden, to pay divine honors to the immortal sculptures of Phidias and Praxiteles, which were brought from all quarters to adorn the squares and baths of Byzantium. The whole Roman world contributed to the splendor of Constantinople. The tutelary deities of all the cities of Greece (their influence, of course, much enfeebled by their removal from their local sanctuaries) were assembled,—the Minerva of Lindus, the Cybele of Mount Dindymus (which was said to have been placed there by the Argonauts), the Muses of Helicon, the Amphitrite of Rhodes, the Pan consecrated by united Greece after the defeat of the Persians, the Delphic Tripod. The Dioscuri overlooked the Hippodrome. At each end of the principal forum were two shrines, one of which held the statue of Cybele, but deprived of her lions and her hands, from the attitude of command distorted into that of a suppliant for the welfare of the city; in the other was

¹ The expression of the Pagan Zosimus shows how completely this language had been adopted by the Heathen: *πᾶς γὰρ χρόνος τῷ θεῷ βραχὺς, αἰεὶ τε ὄντι, καὶ ἔσομένῳ*. He is speaking of an oracle, in which the Pagan party discovered a prediction of the future glory of Byzantium. One letter less would make it the sentence of a Christian appealing to prophecy.

² At a later period, the Virgin Mary obtained the honor of having inspired the foundation of Constantinople, of which she became the tutelary guardian, I had almost written, Deity.

the Fortune of Byzantium.¹ To some part of the Christian community this might appear to be leading, as it were, the gods of Paganism in triumph: the Pagans were shocked on their part by their violent removal from their native fanes, and their wanton mutilation. Yet the Christianity of that age, in full possession of the mind of Constantine, would sternly have interdicted the decoration of a Christian city with these *idols*; the workmanship of Phidias or of Lysippus would have found no favor, when lavished on images of the Demons of Paganism.

The ceremonial of the dedication of the city² was attended by still more dubious circumstances. After a most splendid exhibition of chariot games in the Hippodrome, the emperor moved in a magnificent car through the most public part of the city, encircled by all his guards in the attire of a religious ceremonial and bearing torches in their hands. The emperor himself held a golden statue of the Fortune of the city in his hands. An imperial edict enacted the annual celebration of this rite. On the birthday of the city, the gilded statue of himself, thus bearing the same golden image of Fortune, was annually to be led through the Hippodrome to the foot of the imperial throne, and to receive the adoration of the reigning emperor. The lingering attachment of Constantine to

¹ Euseb., Vit. Const. iii. 54. Sozomen, ii. 5. Codinus, De Orig. C. P. 30-62. Le Beau, i. 30.

Eusebius would persuade his readers that these statues were set up in the public places to excite the general contempt. Zosimus admits with bitterness that they were mutilated from want of respect to the ancient religion. — ii. 31. Compare Socr., Ec. Hist. 1-16.

Read, too (some lines are worth reading), the description by Christodorus of the statues in the public gymnasium of Zeuxippus. Deiphobus is fine. There are also, in strange assemblage, Venus (Cypris), Julius Cæsar, Plato, Hercules, and Homer. — Antholog. Palat. i. 37.

² Paschal Chronicle, p. 529, edit. Bonn.

the favorite superstition of his earlier days may be traced on still better authority. The Grecian worship of Apollo had been exalted into the Oriental veneration of the Sun, as the visible representative of the Deity; and of all the statues which were introduced from different quarters, none were received with greater honor than those of Apollo. In one part of the city stood the Pythian, in the other the Sminthian deity.¹ The Delphic Tripod, which, according to Zosimus, contained an image of the god, stood upon the column of the three twisted serpents, supposed to represent the mythic Python. But on a still loftier, the famous pillar of porphyry, stood an image in which (if we are to credit modern authority; Statue of Constantine. and the more modern our authority, the less likely is it to have invented so singular a statement) Constantine dared to mingle together the attributes of the Sun, of Christ, and of himself.² According to one tradition, this pillar was based, as it were, on another superstition. The venerable Palladium itself, surreptitiously conveyed from Rome, was buried beneath it, and thus transferred the eternal destiny of the old to the new capital. The pillar, formed of marble and of porphyry, rose to the height of a hundred and twenty feet. The colossal image on the top was that of Apollo, either from Phrygia or from Athens. But the head of Constantine had been substituted for that of the god. The sceptre proclaimed the dominion of the world; and it held in its hand the globe, emblematic of universal empire. Around the head, instead of rays, were fixed the nails of the true cross. Is this Paganism

¹ Euseb., Vit. Const. iii. 54.

² The author of the *Antiq. Constantinop.* apud Banduri. See Von Hammer, *Constantinopel und die Bosporus*, i. 162. Philostorgius says that the Christians worshipped this image. — ii. 17.

approximating to Christianity, or Christianity degenerating into Paganism? Thus Constantine, as founder of the new capital, might appear to some still to maintain the impartial dignity of emperor of the world, presiding with serene indifference over the various nations, orders, and religious divisions which peopled his dominions; admitting to the privileges and advantages of citizens in the new Rome all who were tempted to make their dwelling around her seat of empire.

Yet, even during the reign of Constantine, no doubt, the triumphant progress of Christianity tended to efface or to obscure these lingering vestiges of the ancient religion. If here and there remained a shrine or temple belonging to Polytheism, built in proportion to the narrow circuit and moderate population of old Byzantium, the Christian churches, though far from numerous, were gradually rising, in their dimensions more suited to the magnificence and populousness of the new city, and in form proclaiming the dominant faith of Constantinople. The Christians were most likely to crowd into a new city; probably their main strength still lay in the mercantile part of the community: interest and religion would combine in urging them to settle in this promising emporium of trade, where their religion, if it did not reign alone and exclusive, yet maintained an evident superiority over its decaying rival. Those of the old aristocracy who were inclined to Christianity would be much more loosely attached to their Roman residences, and would be most inclined to obey the invitation of the emperor, while the large class of the indifferent would follow at the same time the religious and political bias of the sovereign. Where the attachment to the old religion was so slight and feeble, it was a trifling sacrifice to

Progress of
Christianity.

ambition or interest to embrace the new ; particularly where there was no splendid ceremonial, no connection of the priestly office with the higher dignity of the state ; nothing, in short, which could enlist either old reverential feelings or the imagination in the cause of Polytheism. The sacred treasures, transferred from the Pagan temples to the Christian city, sank more and more into national monuments, or curious remains of antiquity ; their religious significance was gradually forgotten ; they became, in the natural process of things, a mere collection of works of art.

In other respects, Constantinople was not a Roman city. An amphitheatre, built on the restoration of the city after the siege of Severus, was permitted to remain ; but it was restricted to exhibitions of wild beasts : the first Christian city was never disgraced by the bloody spectacle of gladiators.¹ There were theatres indeed ; but it may be doubted whether the noble religious drama of Greece ever obtained popularity in Constantinople. The chariot race was the amusement which absorbed all others ; and to this, at first, as it was not necessarily connected with the Pagan worship, Christianity might be more indulgent. How this taste grew into a passion, and this passion into a frenzy, the later annals of Constantinople bear melancholy witness. Beset with powerful enemies without, oppressed by a tyrannous government within, the people of Constantinople thought of nothing but the color of their faction in the Hippodrome ;

The amphitheatre.

¹ An edict of Constantine (Cod. Theod. xv. 12), if it did not altogether abolish these sanguinary shows, restricted them to particular occasions. "Cruenta spectacula in otio civili, et domesticâ quiete non placent." Criminals were to be sent to the mines. But it would seem that captives taken in war might still be exposed in the amphitheatre. In fact, these bloody exhibitions resisted some time longer the progress of Christian humanity.

and these more engrossing and maddening contentions even silenced the animosity of religious dispute.

During the foundation of Constantinople, the emperor might appear to the Christians to have relapsed from the head of the Christian division of his subjects, into the common sovereign of the Roman world. In this respect, his conduct did not ratify the promise of his earlier acts in the East. He had not only restored Christianity, depressed first by the cruelties of Maximin, and afterwards by the violence of Licinius, but in many cases he had lent his countenance or his more active assistance, to the rebuilding their churches on a more imposing plan. Yet, to all outward appearance, the world was still Pagan: every city seemed still to repose under the tutelary gods of the ancient religion:

Ancient temples. everywhere the temples rose above the buildings of men. If here and there a Christian church, in its magnitude, or in the splendor of its architecture, might compete with the solid and elegant fanes of antiquity, the Christians had neither ventured to expel them from their place of honor, nor to appropriate to their own use those which were falling into neglect or decay. As yet, there had been no invasion but on the opinions and moral influence of Polytheism.

The temples, indeed, of Pagan worship, though subsequently, in some instances, converted to Christian uses, were not altogether suited to the ceremonial of Christianity.¹ The Christians might look on their stateliest buildings with jealousy, — hardly with envy. Whether raised on the huge substructures, and in the

¹ Compare an excellent memoir by M. Quatremère de Quincy on the means of lighting the ancient temples (*Mém. de l'Institut*, iii. 171), and Hope on Architecture.

immense masses of the older Asiatic style, as at Baalbec, or the original Temple at Jerusalem; whether built on the principles of Grecian art, when the secret of vaulting over a vast building seems to have been unknown; or after the general introduction of the arch by the Romans had allowed the roof to spread out to ampler extent, — still the actual enclosed temple was rarely of great dimensions.¹ The largest among the Greeks were hypæthral, open to the sky.² If we judge from the temples crowded together about the Forum, those in Rome contributed to the splendor of the city rather by their number than by their size. The rites of Polytheism, in fact, collected together their vast assemblages rather as spectators than as worshippers.³ The altar itself, in general, stood in the open air, in the court before the temple, where the smoke might find free vent, and rise in its grateful odor to the heavenly dwelling of the gods. The body of the worshippers, therefore, stood in the courts or the surrounding porticos. They might approach individually, and make their separate libation or offering, and then retire to a convenient distance, where they might watch the movements of the ministering priest, receive his announcement of the favorable or sinister signs discovered in the victim, or listen to the hymn, which was the only usual form of adoration or prayer. However

¹ M. Quatremère de Quincy gives the size of some of the ancient temples: Juno at Agrigentum, 116 (Paris) feet; Concord, 120; Pæstum, 110; Theseus, 100; Jupiter at Olympia, or Minerva at Athens, 220–230; Jupiter at Agrigentum, 322; Selinus, 320; Ephesus, 350; Apollo Dindymus at Miletus, 360. — p. 195.

² The real hypæthral temples were to particular divinities, — Jupiter Fulgurator, Cælum, Sol, Luna.

³ Eleusis, the scene of the mysteries, of all the ancient temples had the largest nave: it was “*turbæ theatralis capacissimum*.” — Vitruv. vii. *Ὀχλον θεάτρον δεξασθαι δύναμενον*. — Strabo.

Christianity might admit gradations in its several classes of worshippers, and assign its separate station according to the sex, or the degree of advancement in the religious initiation; however the penitents might be forbidden, until reconciled with the Church, or the catechumens before they were initiated into the community, to penetrate beyond the outer portico, or the first inner division in the church, — yet the great mass of a Christian congregation must be received within the walls of the building; and the service consisting not merely in ceremonies performed by the priesthood, but in prayers, to which all present were expected to respond, and in oral instruction, the actual edifice therefore required more ample dimensions.

In many towns there was another public building, the Basilica, or Hall of Justice,¹ singularly adapted for the Christian worship. This was a large chamber, of an oblong form, with a plain flat exterior wall. The pillars, which in the temples were without, stood within the basilica; and the porch, or that which in the temple was an outward portico, was contained within the basilica. This hall was thus divided by two rows of columns into a central avenue, with two side aisles. The outward wall was easily pierced for windows, without damaging the symmetry or order of the architecture. In the one the male, in the other the female, appellants to justice waited their turn.² The three longitudinal avenues were crossed

¹ “Le Basilique fut l’édifice des anciens, qui convint à la célébration de ses mystères. La vaste capacité de son intérieur, les divisions de son plan, les grandes ouvertures, qui introduisaient de toutes parts la lumière dans son enceinte, le tribunal qui devint la place des célébrans, et du chœur, tout se trouva en rapport avec les pratiques du nouveau culte.” — Q. de Quincy p. 178. See Hope on Architecture, p. 87.

² According to Bingham (lviii. c. 3), the women occupied galleries in

by one in a transverse direction, elevated a few steps, and occupied by the advocates, notaries, and others employed in the public business. At the farther end, opposite to the central avenue, the building swelled out into a semicircular recess, with a ceiling rounded off: it was called *absis* in the Greek, and in Latin *tribunal*. Here sat the magistrate with his assessors, and hence courts of justice were called tribunals.

The arrangement of this building coincided with remarkable propriety with the distribution of a Christian congregation.¹ The sexes retained their separate places in the aisles; the central avenue became the nave, so called from the fanciful analogy of the church to the ship of St. Peter. The transept, the *Bήμα*, or choros, was occupied by the inferior clergy and the singers.² The bishop took the throne of the magistrate, and the superior clergy ranged on each side on the seats of the assessors.

Before the throne of the bishop, either within or on the verge of the recess, stood the altar. This was divided from the nave by the cancelli, or rails; from whence hung curtains, which, during the celebration of the communion, separated the participants from the rest of the congregation.

As these buildings were numerous, and attached to every imperial residence, they might be bestowed at once on the Christians, without either interfering with the course of justice, or bringing the religious feelings of the hostile parties into collision.³ Two, the Sesso-

each aisle above the men. This sort of separation may have been borrowed from the synagogue: probably the practice was not uniform.

¹ Some few churches were of an octagonal form; some in that of a cross. See Bingham, l. viii. c. 3.

² Apost. Const. l. ii. c. 57.

³ There were eighteen at Rome: many of these basilicæ had become ex-

rian and the Lateran, were granted to the Roman Christians by Constantine. And the basilica appears to have been the usual form of building in the West, though — besides the porch, connected with, or rather included within, the building, which became the Narthex, and was occupied by the catechumens and the penitents, and in which stood the piscina, or font of baptism — there was in general an outer open court, surrounded with colonnades. This, as we have seen in the description of the church at Tyre, was general in the East, where the churches retained probably more of the templar form; while in Constantinople, where they were buildings raised from the ground, Constantine appears to have followed the form of the basilica.

By the consecration of these basilicas to the purposes of Christian worship, and the gradual erection of large churches in many of the Eastern cities, Christianity began to assume an outward form and dignity commensurate with its secret moral influence. In imposing magnitude, if not in the grace and magnificence of its architecture, it rivalled the temples of antiquity. But as yet it had neither the power, nor probably the inclination, to array itself in the spoils of Paganism. Its aggression was still rather that of fair competition than of hostile destruction. It was content to behold the silent courts of the Pagan fanes untrodden but by a few casual worshippers; altars without victims; thin wreaths of smoke rising where the air used to be

changes, or places for general business. Among the Roman basilicæ P. Victor reckons the Basilicæ Argentariorum. — Ciampini, tom. i. p. 8.

Some basilicæ were of a very large size. One is described by the younger Pliny, in which one hundred and eighty judges were seated, with a vast multitude of advocates and auditors. — Plin., *Epist.* vi. 33.

Relative
position of
Christianity
and Pagan-
ism.

clouded with the reek of hecatombs; the priesthood murmuring in bitter envy at the throngs which passed by the porticos of their temples towards the Christian church. The direct interference with the freedom of Pagan worship seems to have been confined to the suppression of those Eastern rites which were offensive to public morals. Some of the Syrian temples retained the obscene ceremonial of the older Nature-worship. Religious prostitution, and other monstrous enormities, appeared under the form of divine adoration. The same rites which had endangered the fidelity of the ancient Israelites shocked the severe purity of the Christians. A temple in Syria of the female principle of generation, which Temples suppressed. the later Greeks identified with their Aphrodite, was defiled by these unspeakable pollutions: it was levelled to the ground by the emperor's command; the recesses of the sacred grove laid open to the day, and the rites interdicted.¹ A temple of Æsculapius at Ægæ, in Cilicia, fell under the same proscription. The miraculous cures pretended to be wrought in this temple, where the suppliants passed the night, appear to have excited the jealousy of the Christians; and this was, perhaps, the first overt act of hostility against the established Paganism.² In many other places, the frauds of the priesthood were detected by the zealous incredulity of the Christians; and Polytheism, feebly defended by its own party, at least left to its fate by the Government, assailed on all quarters by an active and persevering enemy, endured affront, exposure, neglect, if not with the dignified patience of martyrdom, with the sullen equanimity of indifference.

Palestine itself, and its capital, Jerusalem, was an

¹ Euseb., Vit. Const. iii. 55.

² Ibid. iii. 56

open province, of which Christianity took entire and almost undisputed possession. Paganism, in the adjacent regions, had built some of its most splendid temples; the later Roman architecture at Gerasa, at Petra, and at Baalbec, appears built on the massive and enormous foundations of the older native structures. But in Palestine Proper it had made no strong settlement. Temples had been raised by Hadrian, in his new city, on the site of Jerusalem. One dedicated to Aphrodite occupied the spot which Christian tradition or later invention asserted to be the sepulchre of Christ.¹ The prohibition issued by Hadrian against the admission of the Jews into the Holy City, doubtless was no longer enforced; but, though not forcibly depressed by public authority, Judaism itself waned, in its own native territory, before the ascendancy of Christianity.

It was in Palestine that the change which had been slowly working into Christianity itself, began to assume a more definite and apparent form. The religion re-issued as it were from its cradle, in a character, if foreign to its original simplicity, singularly adapted to achieve and maintain its triumph over the human mind. It no longer confined itself to its purer moral influence; it was no more a simple spiritual faith, despising all those accessories which captivate the senses, and feed the imagination with new excitement. It no longer disdained the local sanctuary, nor stood independent of those associations with place, which beseeemed an universal and spiritual religion. It began to have its hero-worship, its mythology; it began to crowd the mind with images of a secondary degree

¹ This temple was improbably said to have been built on this spot by Hadrian to insult the Christians; but Hadrian's hostility was against the rebellious Jews, not against the Christians.

of sanctity, but which enthralled and kept in captivity those who were not ripe for the pure moral conception of the Deity, and the impersonation of the Godhead in Jesus Christ. It was, as might not unreasonably be anticipated, a female, the empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, who gave, as it were, this new coloring to Christian devotion. In Palestine, indeed, where her pious activity was chiefly employed, it was the memory of the Redeemer himself which hallowed the scenes of his life and death to the imagination of the believer. Splendid churches arose over the place of his birth at Bethlehem; that of his burial, near the supposed Calvary; that of his ascension, on the Mount of Olives. So far the most spiritual piety could not hesitate to proceed; to such natural and irresistible claims upon its veneration no Christian heart could refuse to yield. The cemeteries of their brethren had, from the commencement of Christianity, exercised a strong influence over the imagination. They had frequently, in times of trial, been the only places of religious assemblage. When hallowed to the feelings by the remains of friends, of bishops, of martyrs, it was impossible to approach them without the profoundest reverence; and the transition from reverence to veneration — to adoration — was too easy and imperceptible to awaken the jealousy of that exclusive devotion due to God and the Redeemer. The sanctity of the place where the Redeemer was supposed to have been laid in the sepulchre, was still more naturally and intimately associated with the purest sentiments of devotion.

But the next step, the discovery of the true cross, was more important. It materialized, at once, the spiritual worship of Christianity. It was reported

throughout wondering Christendom, that tradition, or a vision, having revealed the place of the Holy Sepulchre, the fane of Venus had been thrown down by the imperial command, excavations had been made, the Holy Sepulchre had come to light, and with the Sepulchre three crosses, with the inscription originally written by Pilate in three languages over that of Jesus. As it was doubtful to which of the crosses the tablet with the inscription belonged, a miracle decided to the perplexed believers the claims of the genuine cross.¹ The precious treasure was divided: part, enshrined in a silver case, remained at Jerusalem, from whence pilgrims constantly bore fragments of the still vegetating wood to the West, till enough was accumulated in the different churches to build a ship of war. Part was sent to Constantinople: the nails of the passion of Christ were turned into a bit for the war-horse of the emperor, or, according to another account, represented the rays of the sun around the head of his statue.

A magnificent church, called at first the Church of the Resurrection (Anastasis), afterwards that of the Holy Sepulchre, rose on the sacred spot hallowed by this discovery, in which from that time a large part of the Christian world has addressed its unquestioning orisons. It stood in a large open court, with porticos on each side, with the usual porch, nave, and choir. The nave was inlaid with

Churches
built in
Palestine.

¹ The excited state of the Christian mind, and the tendency to this materialization of Christianity, may be estimated by the undoubting credulity with which they entertained the improbable notion that the crosses were buried with our Saviour, not only that on which He suffered, but those of the two thieves also. From the simple account of the burial in the Gospels, how singular a change to that of the discovery of the cross in the ecclesiastical historians! — Socrates, i. 17. Sozomen, ii. 1. Theodoret, i. 18.

precious marbles; and the roof, overlaid with gold, showered down a flood of light over the whole building; the roofs of the aisles were likewise overlaid with gold. At the farther end arose a dome supported by twelve pillars, in commemoration of the Twelve Apostles; the capitals of these were silver vases. Within the church was another court, at the extremity of which stood the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, lavishly adorned with gold and precious stones, as it were to perpetuate the angelic glory which streamed forth on the day of the resurrection.¹

Another sacred place was purified by the command of Constantine, and dedicated to Christian worship. Near Hebron² there was the celebrated oak or terebinth tree of Mamre, which tradition pointed out as the spot where the angels appeared to Abraham. It is singular that the Heathen are said to have celebrated religious rites at this place, and to have worshipped the celestial visitants of Abraham. It was likewise, as usual in the East, a celebrated emporium of commerce. The worship may have been like that at the Caaba of Mecca before the appearance of Mohammed; for the fame of Abraham seems to have been preserved among the Syrian and Arabian tribes, as well as the Jews. It is remarkable, that, at a later period, the Jews and Christians are said to have met in amicable devotion, and offered their common incense and suspended their lights in the church erected over this spot by the Christian emperor.³

¹ Eusebius, Vit. Constant. iii. 29, *et seq.* This seems to be the sense of the author.

² On Hebron, read Dr. Stanley's most interesting account of his visit to the tomb of Abraham with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

³ Antoninus in Itinerario. See Heinichen, Note on Euseb. Vit Const iii. 53.

CHAPTER IV.

Trinitarian Controversy.

BUT it was as arbiter of religious differences, as pre-
Trinitarian
controversy. siding in their solemn councils, that Constantine appeared to the Christians the avowed and ostensible head of their community. Immediately after his victory over Licinius, Constantine had found the East, no less than the West, agitated by the dissensions of his Christian subjects. He had hoped to allay the flames of the Donatist schism, by the consent and impartial authority of the Western churches. A more extensive, if as yet less fiercely agitated, contest disturbed the Eastern provinces. Outward peace seemed to be restored only to give place to intestine dissension. I must re-ascend the course of Christian history for several years, in order to trace in one continuous narrative the rise and progress of the Trinitarian controversy. This dissension had broken out soon after Constantine's subjugation of the East: already, before the building of Constantinople, it had obtained full possession of the public mind, and the great Council of Nicæa, the first real senate of Christendom, had passed its solemn decree. The Donatist schism was but a local dissension: it raged, indeed, with fatal and implacable fury; but it was almost entirely confined to the limits of a single province. The Trinitarian controversy was the first dissension which rent asunder the whole body of the Christians,

arrayed in almost every part of the world two hostile parties in implacable opposition, and, at a later period, exercised a powerful political influence on the affairs of the world. How singular an illustration of the change already wrought in the mind of man by the introduction of Christianity! Questions which, if they had arisen in the earlier period of the world, would have been limited to a priestly caste, — if in Greece, would have been confined to the less frequented schools of Athens or Alexandria, and might have produced some intellectual excitement among the few who were conversant with the higher philosophy, — now agitated the populace of great cities, occupied the councils of princes, and, at a later period, determined the fate of kingdoms and the sovereignty of great part of Europe.¹ It appears still more extraordinary, since this controversy related to a purely speculative tenet. The disputants of either party might possibly have asserted the superior tendency of each system to enforce the severity of Christian morals, or to excite the ardor of Christian piety; but they appear to have dwelt little, if at all, on the practical effects of the conflicting opinions. In morals, in manners, in habits, in usages, in church government, in religious ceremonial, there was no distinction between the parties which divided Christendom. The Gnostic sects inculcated a severer asceticism, and differed, in many of their usages, from the general body of the Christians. The Donatist factions commenced at least with a question of church discipline, and almost grew into a strife for political ascendancy. The Arians and Athanasians first divided the world on a pure question of faith. From this

¹ For instance, when the savage orthodoxy of the Franks made the more refined Arianism of the Visigoths a pretext for hostile invasion.

period we may date the introduction of rigorous articles of belief, which required the submissive assent of the mind to every word and letter of an established creed, and which raised the slightest heresy of opinion into a more fatal offence against God, and a more odious crime in the estimation of man, than the worst moral delinquency or the most flagrant deviation from the spirit of Christianity.

The Trinitarian controversy was the natural though tardy growth of the Gnostic opinions: it could scarcely be avoided when the exquisite distinctness and subtlety of the Greek language were applied to religious opinions of an Oriental origin. Even the Greek of the New Testament retained something of the significant and reverential vagueness of Eastern expression. This vagueness, even philosophically speaking, may better convey to the mind those mysterious conceptions of the Deity which are beyond the province of reason than the anatomical precision of philosophic Greek. The first Christians were content to worship, with undefined fervor, the Deity as revealed in the Gospel. They assented to, and repeated with devout adoration, the words of the Sacred Writings, or those which had been made use of from the apostolic age; but they did not decompose them, or, with nice and scrupulous accuracy, appropriate peculiar terms to each manifestation of the Godhead. It was the great characteristic of the Oriental theologies, as described in a former chapter, to preserve the primal and parental Deity at the greatest possible distance from the material creation. This originated in the elementary tenet of the irreclaimable evil of matter. In the present day, the more rational believer labors under the constant dread, if not of materializing, of

Origin of the
controversy.

humanizing too much, the Great Supreme. A certain degree of indistinctness appears inseparable from that vastness of conception which arises out of the more extended knowledge of the works of the Creator. A more expanding and comprehensive philosophy increases the distance between the Omnific First Cause and the race of man. All that defines seems to limit and circumscribe the Deity. Yet in thus rev-

Constant struggle between the intellectual and devotional conception of the Deity.

erentially repelling the Deity into an unapproachable sphere, and investing him, as it were, in a nature absolutely unimaginable

by the mind; in thus secluding him from the degradation of being vulgarized, if the expression may be ventured, by profane familiarity, or circumscribed by the narrowness of the human intellect,—God is gradually subtilized and sublimated into a being beyond the reach of devotional feelings, almost superior to adoration. There is in mankind, and in the individual man, on the one hand, an intellectual tendency to refine the Deity into a mental conception; and, on the other, an instinctive counter-tendency to impersonate him into a material, and, when the mind is ruder and less intellectual, a mere human being. Among the causes which have contributed to the successful promulgation of Christianity, and the maintenance of its influence over the mind of man, was the singular beauty and felicity with which its theory of the conjunction of the divine and human nature, each preserving its separate attributes, on the one hand, enabled the mind to preserve inviolate the pure conception of the Deity; on the other, to approximate it, as it were, to human interests and sympathies. But this is done rather by a process of instinctive feeling than by strict logical reasoning. Even here, there is a perpetual

strife between the intellect, which guards with jealousy the divine conception of the Redeemer's nature; and the sentiment, or even the passion, which so draws down the general notion to its own capacities, so approximates and assimilates it to its own ordinary sympathies, as to absorb the Godhead in the human nature.

The Gnostic systems had universally admitted the seclusion of the primal Deity from all intercourse with matter: that intercourse had taken place, through a derivative and intermediate being, more or less remotely proceeding from the sole fountain of Godhead. This, however, was not the part of Gnosticism which was chiefly obnoxious to the general sentiments of the Christian body. Their theories about the malignant nature of the Creator; the identification of the God of the Jews with this hostile being; the Docetism which asserted the unreality of the Redeemer,—these points, with their whole system of the origin of the worlds and of mankind, excited the most vigorous and active resistance. But when the wilder theories of Gnosticism began to die away, or to rank themselves under the hostile standard of Manicheism; when their curious cosmogonical notions were dismissed, and the greater part of the Christian world began to agree in the plain doctrines of the eternal supremacy of God; the birth, the death, the resurrection, of Christ as the Son of God; the effusion of the Holy Spirit,—questions began to arise as to the peculiar nature and relation between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In all the systems, a binary, in most a triple, modification of the Deity was admitted. The Logos, the Divine Word or Reason, might differ, in the various schemes, in his relation to the parental Divinity and to the universe; but there was this distinctive and ineffaceable char-

acter, that He was the Mediator, the connecting link between the unseen and unapproachable world and that of man. This Platonism, if it may be so called, was universal. It differed, indeed, widely in most systems from the original philosophy of the Athenian sage: it had acquired a more Oriental and imaginative cast. Plato's poetry of words had been expanded into the poetry of conceptions. It may be doubted whether Plato himself impersonated the Logos, the Word or Reason of the Deity: with him it was rather an attribute of the Godhead. In one sense, it was the chief of these archetypal ideas, according to which the Creator framed the universe; in another, the principle of life, motion, and harmony which pervaded all things. This Platonism had gradually absorbed all the more intellectual class: it hovered over, as it were, and gathered under its wings all the religions of the world. It had already modified Judaism; it had allied itself with the Syrian and Mithriac worship of the Sun, the visible Mediator, the emblem of the Word; it was part of the general Nature-worship; it was attempting to renew Paganism, and was the recognized and leading tenet in the higher Mysteries. Disputes on the nature of Christ were indeed co-eval with the promulgation of Christianity. Some of the Jewish converts had never attained to the sublimer notion of his mediatorial character; but this disparaging notion, adverse to the ardent zeal of the rest of the Christian world, had isolated this sect. The imperfect Christianity of the Ebionites had long ago expired in an obscure corner of Palestine. In all the other divisions of Christianity, the Christ had more or less approximated to the office and character of this Being which connected mankind with the Eternal Father.

Alexandria, the fatal and prolific soil of speculative controversy, where speculative controversy was most likely to madden into furious and lasting hostility, gave birth to this new element of disunion in the Christian world. The Trinitarian question, indeed, had already been agitated within a less extensive sphere. Noetus, an Asiatic, either of Smyrna or Ephesus, had dwelt with such exclusive zeal on the unity of the Godhead, as to absorb, as it were, the whole Trinity into one undivided and undistinguished Being. The one supreme and impassible Father united to himself the man Jesus, whom He had created, by so intimate a conjunction, that the divine unity was not destroyed. His adversaries drew the conclusion, that, according to this blaspheming theory, the Father must have suffered on the cross; and the ignominious name of Patripassians adhered to the few followers of this unprosperous sect.¹

Sabellianism had excited more attention. Sabellius was an African of the Cyrenaic province. According to his system, it was the same Deity, under different forms, who existed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. A more modest and unoffending Sabellianism might perhaps be imagined in accordance with modern philosophy. The manifestations of the same Deity, or rather of his attributes, through which alone the Godhead becomes comprehensible to the human mind, may have been thus successively made in condescension to our weakness of intellect. It would be the same

¹ I have not thought it necessary to enter into the various shades of Monarchianism, especially in the Church at Rome, on which the *Philosophumena* has shed new light.

Deity, assuming, as it were, an objective form, so as to come within the scope of the human mind; a real difference, as regards the conception of man, perfect unity in its subjective existence. This, however, though some of its terms may appear the same with the Sabellianism of antiquity, would be the Trinitarianism of a philosophy unknown at this period. The language of the Sabellians implied, to the jealous ears of their opponents, that the distinction between the persons of the Trinity was altogether unreal. While the Sabellian party charged their adversaries with a Heathen Tritheistic worship, they retorted by accusing Sabellianism of annihilating the separate existence of the Son and the Holy Ghost. But Sabellianism had not divided Christianity into two irreconcilable parties. Even now, but for the commanding characters of the champions who espoused each party, the Trinitarian controversy might have been limited to a few provinces, and become extinct in some years. But it arose, not merely under the banners of men endowed with those abilities which command the multitude; it not merely called into action the energies of successive disputants, the masters of the intellectual attainments of the age, — it appeared at a critical period, when the rewards of success were more splendid, the penalty upon failure proportionately more severe. The contest was now not merely for a superiority over a few scattered and obscure communities: it was agitated on a vaster theatre, — that of the Roman world; the proselytes whom it disputed were sovereigns; it contested the supremacy of the human mind, which was now bending to the yoke of Christianity. It is but judging on the common principles of human nature to conclude, that the grandeur of the prize supported the ambition and

inflamed the passions of the contending parties ; that human motives of political power and aggrandizement mingled with the more spiritual influences of the love of truth, and zeal for the purity of religion.

The doctrine of the Trinity—that is, the divine nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—was acknowledged by all. To each of these distinct and separate beings, both parties ascribed the attributes of the Godhead, with the exception of self-existence, which was restricted by the Arians to the Father. Both admitted the anti-mundane Being of the Son and the Holy Spirit. But, according to the Arian, there was a time, before the commencement of the ages, when the Parent Deity dwelt alone in undeveloped, undivided unity. At this time, immeasurably, incalculably, inconceivably remote, the majestic solitude ceased,¹ the divine unity was broken by an act of the sovereign Will ; and the only-begotten Son, the image of the Father, the Vicegerent of all the divine power, the intermediate Agent in all the long subsequent work of creation, *began to be*.²

Such was the question which led to all the evils of human strife,—hatred, persecution, bloodshed. But, however profoundly humiliating this fact in the history of mankind, and in the history of Christianity an epoch of complete revolution from its genuine spirit, it may fairly be inquired, whether this was not an object more generous, more unselfish, and at least as wise, as many of those motives of personal and national advantage and aggrandizement, or many of those magic words, which, embraced by two parties with blind and unintelligent fury, have led to the most

¹ Compare Cyril. Alex., Epist. i. 7 ; Labbe, p. 26.

² Compare the letter of Arius, in Theodoret, lib. i. c. v.

disastrous and sanguinary events in the annals of man. It might, indeed, have been supposed that a profound metaphysical question of this kind would have been far removed from the passions of the multitude; but with the multitude, and that multitude often comprehends nearly the whole of society, it is the passion which seeks the object,—not the object which, of its own exciting influence, inflames the passion. In fact, religion was become the one dominant passion of the whole Christian world; and every thing allied to it, or rather, in this case, which seemed to concern its very essence, could no longer be agitated with tranquillity, or debated with indifference. The Pagan party, miscalculating the inherent strength of the Christian system, saw, no doubt, in these disputes, the seeds of the destruction of Christianity. The contest was brought on the stage at Alexandria;¹ but there was no Aristophanes, or rather the serious and unpoetic time could not have produced an Aristophanes, who might at once show that he understood, while he broadly ridiculed, the follies of his adversaries. The days even of a Lucian were past.² Discord, which at times is fatal to a nation or to a sect, seems at others, by the animating excitement of rivalry, the stirring collision of hostile energy, to favor the development of moral strength. The Christian republic, like Rome when rent asunder by domestic factions, calmly proceeded in her conquest of the world.

The plain and intelligible principle which united the opponents of Arius was, no doubt, a vague, and, however perhaps overstrained, neither ungenerous nor unnatural jealousy, lest the dignity of the Redeemer,

¹ Euseb., Vit. Constant. ii. 61; Socrates, i. 6.

² The Philopatris, of whatever age it may be, is clearly not Lucian's; and at most, only slightly touches these questions.

the object of their grateful adoration, might in some way be lowered by the new hypothesis. The divinity of the Saviour seemed inseparably connected with his co-equality with the Father: it was endangered by the slightest concession on this point. It was their argument, that, if the Son was not co-eval in existence with the Father, he must have been created, and created out of that which was not pre-existent. But a created being must be liable to mutability; and it was asserted in the public address of the Patriarch of Alexandria, that this fatal consequence had been extorted from an unguarded Arian, if not from Arius himself, — that it was *possible* that the Son might have fallen, like the great rebellious angel.¹

The patriarch of this important see, the metropolis of Egypt, was named Alexander. It was Alexander, Patriarch of Alexandria. said that Arius, a presbyter of acute powers of reasoning, popular address, and blameless character, had declined that episcopal dignity.² The Arius. person of Arius³ was tall and graceful; his countenance calm, pale, and subdued; his manners engaging; his conversation fluent and persuasive. He was well acquainted with human sciences; as a disputant, subtle, ingenious, and fertile in resources. His enemies add to this character, which themselves have preserved, that this humble and mortified exterior concealed unmeasured ambition; that his simplicity,

¹ Epiphan., Hær. 69, tom. i. p. 723–727.

² See Philostorgius (the Arian writer). Theodoret, on the other hand, says that he brought forward his opinions from envy at the promotion of Alexander. — i. 2. See the Epistle of Alexander, in Socrat. Hist. Eccl. l. 6.

³ Arius is said, in his early life, to have been implicated in the sect of the Meletians, which seems to have been rather a party than a sect. They were the followers of Meletius, Bishop of Lycopolis, who had been deposed for having sacrificed during the persecution. Yet this sect or party lasted for more than a century.

frankness, and honesty only veiled his craft and love of intrigue; that he appeared to stand aloof from all party, merely that he might guide his cabal with more perfect command, and agitate and govern the hearts of men. Alexander was accustomed, whether for the instruction of the people, or the display of his own powers, to debate in public these solemn questions on the nature of the Deity, and the relation of the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father. According to the judgment of Arius, Alexander fell inadvertently into the heresy of Sabellianism, and was guilty of confounding in the simple unity of the Godhead the existence of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.¹

The intemperate indignation of Alexander at the objections of Arius betrayed more of the baffled disputant, or the wounded pride of the dignitary, than the serenity of the philosopher, or the meekness of the Christian. He armed himself ere long in all the terrors of his office, and promulgated his anathema in terms full of exaggeration and violence. "The impious Arius, the forerunner of Antichrist, had dared to utter his blasphemies against the Divine Redeemer." Arius, expelled from Alexandria, not indeed before his opinions had spread through the whole of Egypt and Libya,² retired to the more congenial atmosphere of Syria.³ There, his vague theory caught the less

¹ Socrates, i. 5, 6.

² The account of Sozomen says, that Alexander at first vacillated, but that he afterwards commanded Arius to adopt his opinions: τὸν Ἀρειὸν ὁμοίως φρονεῖν ἐκέλευσε. Sozomen acknowledges the high character of many of the Arian bishops: πλείστους ἀγαθοῦ βίου προσχήματι σεμνινῶς, καὶ πιθανότητι λόγον δεινούς, συλλαμβανομένους τοῖς ἀμφὶ τὸν Ἀρειὸν.

³ It was during his retreat that he wrote his famous *Thalia*; the gay and convivial title of which is singularly out of keeping with the grave and serious questions then in agitation. His adversaries represent this as a poem full of profane wit, and even of indecency. It was written in the same man-

severely reasoning and more imaginative minds of the Syrian bishops:¹ the lingering Orientalism prepared them for this kindred hypothesis. The most learned, the most pious, the most influential, united themselves to his party. The chief of these were the two prelates named Eusebius, — one the ecclesiastical historian; the other, bishop of the important city of Nicomedia. Throughout the East, the controversy was propagated with earnest rapidity. It was not repressed by the attempts of Licinius to interrupt the free intercourse between the Christian communities, and his prohibition of the ecclesiastical synods. The ill-smothered flame burst into tenfold fury on the reunion of the East to the empire of Constantine. The interference of the emperor was loudly demanded to allay the strife which distracted the Christendom of

ure, and to the same air, with the Sotadic verses, which were proverbial for their grossness even among the Greeks. It is difficult to reconcile this account of the *Thalia* with the subtle and politic character which his enemies attribute to Arius, still less to the protection of such men as Eusebius of Nicomedia, and the other Syrian prelates. Arius, likewise, composed hymns, in accordance with his opinions, to be chanted by sailors, those who worked at the mill, or travellers. Songs of this kind abounded in the Greek poetry: each art and trade had its song;* and Arius may have intended no more than to turn this popular practice in favor of Christianity, by substituting sacred for profane songs, which, of course, would be imbued with his own opinions. Might not the *Thalia* have been written in the same vein, and something in the same spirit, with which a celebrated modern humorist and preacher adapted hymns to some of the most popular airs, and declared that the devil ought not to have all the best tunes? The general style of Arius is said to have been soft, effeminate, and popular. The specimen from the *Thalia* (in Athanas. *Or. i. Cont. Ar. c. 5*) is very loose and feeble Greek. Yet it is admitted that Arius was an expert dialectician; and no weak orator would have maintained such a contest so long.

¹ The bishops of Ptolemais, in the Pentapolis, and Theonas of Marmarica, joined his party. The females were inclined to his side. Seven hundred virgins of Alexandria, and of the Mareotic nome, owned him for their spiritual teacher. Compare the letter of Alexander in Theodoret, ch. iv.

* Ilgen, *De Scolorum Poesi*, p. xiii.

the East. The behavior of Constantine was regulated by the most perfect equanimity, or, more probably, guided by some counsellor of mild and more humane Christianity: his letter of peace was, in its spirit, a model of temper and conciliation.¹

Letter of
Constantine.

With profound sorrow he had heard that his designs for the unity of the empire, achieved by his victory over Licinius, as well as for the unity of the faith, had been disturbed by this unexpected contest. His impartial rebuke condemned Alexander for unnecessarily agitating such frivolous and unimportant questions, and Arius for not suppressing, in prudent and respectful silence, his objections to the doctrine of the patriarch. It recommended the judicious reserve of the philosophers, who had never debated such subjects before an ignorant and uneducated audience, and who differed without acrimony on such profound questions. He entreated them, by the unanimous suppression of all feelings of unhallowed animosity, to restore his cheerful days and undisturbed nights. Of the same faith, the same form of worship, they ought to meet in amicable synod, to adore their common God in peaceful harmony, and not fall into discord as to accuracy of expression on these most minute of questions; to enjoy and allow freedom in the sanctuary of their own minds, but to remain united in the common bonds of Christian love.²

It is probable, that the hand of Hosius, Bishop of Cordova in Spain, is to be traced in that royal and Christian letter. The influence of Hosius was uni-

¹ See the letter in Euseb., Vit. Constant. ii. 64-72.

² Ἄ δ' ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐλαχίστων τούτων ζητήσεων ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἀκριβολογεῖσθε καὶ μὴ πρὸς μὴν γνώμην συμφέρησθε, μένειν εἰς λογισμοῦ προσήκει, τῷ τῆς διανοίας ἀπορρήτῳ τηρούμενοι. — Euseb., Vit. Constant. ii. 71.

formly exercised in this manner. Wherever the edicts of the government were mild, conciliating, and humane, we find the Bishop of Cordova. It is by no means an improbable conjecture of Tillemont, that he was the Spaniard who afterwards, in the hour of mental agony and remorse, administered to the emperor the balm of Christian penitence.

Hosius was sent to Egypt, as the imperial commissioner, to assuage the animosity of the distracted Church. But religious strife, in Egypt more particularly, its natural and prolific soil, refused to listen to the admonitions of Christian wisdom or imperial authority. Eusebius compares the fierce conflict of parties — bishops with bishops, people with people — to the collision of the Symplegades.¹ From the mouths of the Nile to the Cataracts, the divided population tumultuously disputed the nature of the divine unity.²

A general council of the heads of the various Christian communities throughout the Roman empire was summoned by the imperial mandate, to establish, on the consentient authority of assembled Christendom, the true doctrine on these contested points, and to allay for ever this propensity to hostile disputation. The same paramount tribunal was to settle definitely another subordinate question relating to the time of keeping the Easter festival. Many of the Eastern communities shocked their more scrupulous brethren by following the calculations, and observing the same sacred days with the impious and abhorred Jews; for the further we advance in the Christian history, the estrangement

Council of
Nice.

Controversy
about keep-
ing Easter.

¹ Vit. Const. iii. 4.

² Ἐριδες ἐν ἐκάστη πόλει καὶ κόμη, καὶ μάχαι περὶ τῶν θεῶν δογματῶν ἐγίνοντο. — Theodo'et, i. 6.

of the Christians from the Jews darkens more and more into absolute antipathy.

In the month of May or June (the 20th¹), in the year 325, met the great council of Nicæa. Not half a century before, the Christian bishops A.D. 325. even in that city had been only marked as the objects of the most cruel insult and persecution. They had been chosen, on account of their eminence in their own communities, as the peculiar victims of the stern policy of the Government. They had been driven into exile, set to work in the mines, exposed to every kind of humiliation and suffering, from which some had in mercy been released by death. They now assembled, under the imperial sanction, a religious senate from all parts at least of the Eastern world: for Italy was represented only by two presbyters of Rome; Hosius appeared for Spain, Gaul, and Britain. The spectacle was altogether new to the world. No wide-ruling sovereign would ever have thought of summoning a conclave of the sacerdotal orders of the different religions: a synod of philosophers to debate some grave metaphysical or even political question was equally inconsistent with the ordinary usages and sentiments of Grecian or Roman society.

The public establishment of post-horses was commanded to afford every facility, and that gratuitously, for the journey of the assembling bishops.² Vehicles or mules were to be provided, as though the assembly were an affair of state, at the public charge. At a later period, when councils became more frequent, the Heathen historian complains, that the public service was

¹ One of these dates rests on the authority of Socrates, xiii. 26; the other, on the Paschal Chronicle, p. 282. Compare Pagi, p. 404.

² Euseb., Vit. Const. iii. 6; Theodoret, i. 7.

impeded, and the post-horses harassed and exhausted, by the incessant journeying to and fro of the Christian delegates to their councils.¹ They were sumptuously maintained during the sitting at the public charge.²

Above three hundred bishops were present, pres-
Number of
bishops
present. byters, deacons, acolyths without number,³ a
 considerable body of laity; but it was the
 presence of the emperor himself which gave its chief
 weight and dignity to the assembly. Nothing could
 so much confirm the Christians in the opinion of their
 altered position, or declare to the world at large the
 growing power of Christianity, as this avowed interest
 taken in their domestic concerns; or so tend to raise
 the importance attached even to the more remote and
 speculative doctrines of the new faith, as this un-
 precedented condescension, so it would seem to the

First meet-
ings of the
council.

Heathen, on the part of the emperor. The
 council met, probably, in a spacious basilica.⁴
 Eusebius describes the scene as himself deeply im-
 pressed with its solemnity. The assembly sat in
 profound silence; while the great officers of state and
 other dignified persons (there was no armed guard)
 entered the hall, and awaited in proud and trembling
 expectation the appearance of the emperor of the
 world in a Christian council. Constantine at length

¹ Amm. Marcellinus, xvi. 16. Read in Stanley's *Eastern Church* the gathering and the names and characters of the assembled bishops, p. 109, *et seqq.*

² Euseb. iii. 9.

³ There was one bishop from Persia, one from Scythia. Eusebius states the number at two hundred and fifty: that in the text is on the authority of Theodoret, and of the numbers said to have signed the creed.

⁴ There is a long note in Heinichen's Eusebius to prove that they did not meet in the palace, but in a church; as though the authority of their proceedings depended upon their place of assembly. It was probably a basilica, or hall of justice; the kind of building usually made over by the Government for the purposes of Christian worship; and, in general, the model of the earliest Christian edifices.

entered; he was splendidly attired; the eyes of the bishops were dazzled by the gold and precious stones upon his raiment. The majesty of his person and the modest dignity of his demeanor heightened the effect: the whole assembly rose to do him honor; he advanced to a low golden seat prepared for him, and did not take his seat (it is difficult not to suspect Eusebius of highly coloring the deference of the emperor) till a sign of permission had been given by the bishops.¹ One of the leading prelates (probably Eusebius the historian) commenced the proceedings with a short address, and a hymn to Almighty God. Constantine then delivered an exhortation to unity in the Latin language, which was interpreted to the Greek bishops. His admonition seems at first to have produced no great effect. Mutual accusation, defence, and recrimination prolonged the debate.² Constantine Behavior of Constantine. seems to have been present during the greater part of the sittings, listening with patience, softening asperities, countenancing those whose language tended to peace and union, and conversing familiarly, in the best Greek he could command, with the different prelates. The courtly flattery of the council might attribute to Constantine himself what was secretly suggested by the Bishop of Cordova. For, powerful and comprehensive as his mind may have been, it is incredible that a man so educated, and engaged during the early period of his life with military and civil affairs, could have entered, particularly being imper

¹ Οὐ πρότερον ἢ τοῦς ἐπισκόπους ἐπινεύσαι. See also Socrates, i. 8. In Theodoret (i. 7), this has grown into his humbly asking permission to sit down.

² Constantine burned the libels which the bishops had presented against each other. Many of these (the ecclesiastical historian intimates) arose out of private animosities. — Socrates, i. 6.

fectly acquainted with the Greek language, into these discussions on religious metaphysics.

The council sat for rather more than two months.¹ Towards the close, Constantine, on the occasion of the commencement of the twentieth year of his reign,² condescended to invite the bishops to a sumptuous banquet. All attended; and, as they passed through the imperial guard, treated with every mark of respect, they could not but call to mind the total revolution in their circumstances. Eusebius betrays his transport by the acknowledgment that they could scarcely believe that it was a reality, not a vision: to the grosser conception of those who had not purified their minds from the millennial notions, the banquet seemed the actual commencement of the kingdom of Christ.

The Nicene Creed was the result of the solemn deliberation of the assembly. It was conceived
Nicene Creed. with some degree of Oriental indefiniteness, harmonized with Grecian subtlety of expression. The vague and somewhat imaginative fulness of its original Eastern terms was not too severely limited by the fine precision of its definitions. One fatal word broke the harmony of assent with which it was received by the whole council. Christ was declared Homousios, of the same *substance* with the Father;³ and the undeniable, if perhaps inevitable, ambiguity of this single

¹ According to some, two months and eleven days; to others, two months and six days.

² This seems to reconcile the difficulty started by Heinichen. The 20th year of Constantine's reign began the 8th Cal. Aug. A.D. 325. Eusebius uses the inaccurate word ἐπ'αρχοῦτο. — Vit. Const. iii. 14.

³ Athanasius himself allowed that the bishops who deposed Paul of Samosata were justified in rejecting the word *ὁμοούσιον*, because they understood it in a material or corporeal sense. But the privilege allowed to those who had died in orthodox reputation was denied to the Arians and Semi-Arians. — De Synodis, Athanas. Oper. i. p. 759. It is impossible to read some

term involved Christianity in centuries of hostility. To one party it implied absolute identity, and was therefore only ill-disguised Sabellianism; to the other it was essential to the co-equal and co-eval dignity of the three persons in the Godhead. To some of the Syrian bishops it implied or countenanced the material notion of the Deity.¹ It was, it is said by one ecclesiastical historian, a battle in the night, in which neither party could see the meaning of the other.²

Three hundred and eighteen bishops confirmed this creed by their signatures: five alone still contested the single expression, the Homo-<sup>Five recu-
sants.</sup>ousion, — Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicæa, Theonas of Marmarica, Maris of Chalcedon, and Eusebius of Cæsarea. Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis were banished. Eusebius of Cæsarea,

pages of this treatise without the unpleasant conviction, that Athanasius was determined to make out the Arians to be in the wrong.

¹ Μῆτε γὰρ δύνασθαι τὴν αὐλὸν καὶ νοεραν καὶ ἀσώματον φύσιν, σωματικόν τι πάθος ὑφίστασθαι. This is the language of Eusebius.

Φασὶ δὲ ὁμῶς περὶ τοῦτον, ὡς ἄρα θέλων ὁ Θεὸς τὴν γεννητὴν κτίσαι φύσιν, ἐπειδὴ ἑώρα μὴ δυναμένην αὐτὴν μετασχεῖν τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκρίτου, καὶ τῆς παρ' αὐτοῦ δημιουργίας, ποιεῖ καὶ κτίζει πρῶτως μόνος μόνον ἓνα, καὶ καλεῖ τοῦτον νῖδν καὶ λόγον. ἵνα τοῦτον μέσσω γενομένου, οὕτως λοιπὸν καὶ τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι ὀνηθῇ. ταῦτα σὺ μόνον εἰρήκασιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ γράψαι τετολμήκασιν Εὐσέβιος τε, καὶ Ἀρειὸς καὶ ὁ θύσας Ἀστέριος. — Athan., Orat. ii. c. 24. Compare Möhler (a learned and strongly orthodox Roman Catholic writer), Athanasius der Grösse, b. i. p. 195. Möhler but dimly sees the Gnostic or Oriental origin of this notion, which lies at the bottom of Arianism.

² This remarkable sentence does credit to the judgment and impartiality of Socrates: Νυκτομαχίας δὲ οὐδὲν ὑπέιχε τὰ γιγνομένα, οὐτὲ γὰρ ἀλλήλους ἐφαίνοντο νοοῦντες, ἀφ' ὧν ἀλλήλους βλασφημεῖν ὑπελάμβανον· οἱ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ ὁμοουσίου τὴν λέξιν ἐκκλίνοντες τὴν Σαβελλίου καὶ Μοντανοῦ δόξαν εἰσηγεῖσθαι αὐτὴν τοὺς προσδεχομένους ἐνόμιζον· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο βλασφήμους ἐκάλουν· ὡς ἀναρροῦντες τὴν ὑπαρξιν τοῦ νιῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ· εἰ δὲ πᾶν τῷ ὁμοουσίῳ προσκείμενοι πολυθεῖαν εἰσάγειν τοὺς ἑτέρους νομίζοντες, ὡς Ἑλληνισμὸν εἰσαγόντας ἐξετράποντο. — c. 23. Add to these, above all, the decisive words of Arius himself, quoted in Latin Christianity. — i. 131.

after much hesitation, consented to subscribe, but sent the creed into his diocese with a comment, explanatory of the sense in which he understood the contested word. His chief care was to guard against giving the slightest countenance to the material conception of the Deity. Two only withstood with uncompromising resistance the decree of the council. The solemn anathema of this Christian senate was pro-^{Banishment of Arius.}nounced against Arius and his adherents; they were banished by the civil power; and they were especially interdicted from disturbing the peace of Alexandria by their presence.¹

Peace might seem to be restored,—the important question set at rest by the united authority of the emperor, and a representative body which might fairly presume to deliver the sentiments of the whole Christian world. But the Arians were condemned, not convinced; discomfited, not subdued.² Rather more than two years elapsed, eventful in the private life of Constantine, but tranquil in the history of the Christian Church. The imperial assessor in the Christian council had appeared in the West under a different character, as the murderer of his son and of his wife. He returned to the East, determined no more to visit the imperial city of the West; where, instead of the humble deference with which all parties courted his approbation, he had been unable to close his ears

¹ In one passage in the *De Synodis*, Athanasius accused not only the Arian but the Semi-Arian party, Eusebius as well as Arius, of something like Socinianism.

Ὡς ἔστιν υἱὸς ὁμοίως πατρί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν συμφωνίαν δόγματων καὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας.—p. 766, Athan. Oper. 1.

² The writings of Arius and his followers were condemned to be burned. If we are to believe Sozomen (which I confess that I am disinclined to do), the concealment of such heretical works was made a capital offence.—E. H. lib. i. c. 21.

against the audacious and bitter pasquinade which arraigned his cruelty to his own family. His return to the East, instead of overawing the contending factions into that unity which he declared to be the dearest wish of his heart, by his own sudden change of conduct, was the signal for the revival of the fiercest contentions. The Christian community was ^{Change in the opinions of} now to pay a heavy penalty for the pride and ^{Constantine} triumph with which they had hailed the interference of the emperor in their religious questions. The imperial decisions had been admitted by the dominant party when on their own side, to add weight to the decree of the council. At least, they had applauded the sentence of banishment pronounced by the civil power against their antagonists: that authority now assumed a different tone, and was almost warranted, by their own admission, in expecting the same prompt obedience. The power which had exiled, might restore, the heretic to his place and station. Court influence, however obtained through court intrigue or from the caprice of the ruling sovereign, by this fatal, perhaps inevitable step, became the arbiter of the most vital questions of Christian faith and discipline; and thus the first precedent of a temporal punishment for an ecclesiastical offence was a dark prog-^{A.D. 326, 336.}nostic, and an example, of the difficulties which would arise during the whole history of Christianity, when the communities, so distinctly two when they were separate and adverse, became one by the identification of the Church and the state. The restoration of a banished man to the privileges of a citizen by the civil power seemed to command his restoration to religious privileges by the ecclesiastical authority.¹

¹ Socr. i. 25, 26, Soz. ii. 27.

The Arian party gradually grew into favor. A presbyter of Arian sentiments had obtained complete command over the mind of Constantia, the sister of Constantine. On her dying bed, she entreated the emperor to reconsider the justice of the sentence against that innocent, as she declared, and misrepresented man. Arius could not believe the sudden reverse of fortune; and not till he received a pressing letter from Constantine himself did he venture to leave his place of exile. A person of still greater importance was at the same time re-instated in the imperial favor. Among the adherents of the Arian form, perhaps the most important was Eusebius, Eusebius of Nicomedia. Bishop of Nicomedia. A dangerous suspicion that he had been too closely connected with the interests of Licinius, during the recent struggle for empire, had alienated the mind of Constantine, and deprived Eusebius of that respectful attention which he might have commanded by his station, ability, and experience. A.D. 327. With Theognis, Bishop of Nicæa, his faithful adherent in opinion and in fortune, he had been sent into exile: it is remarkable that the prelates of these two sees, the most important in that part of Asia, should have concurred in these views. The exiled prelates, in their petition for re-instatement in their dioceses, declared, and (notwithstanding the charge of falsehood which their opponents to the present day do not scruple to make, would they have ventured in a public document addressed to Constantine to misstate a fact so notorious?) they solemnly protested, that they had not refused their signatures to the Nicene Creed, but only to the anathema pronounced against Arius and his followers. "Their obstinacy arose, not from want of faith, but from excess of

charity." They returned in triumph to their dioceses, and ejected the bishops who had been appointed in their place. No resistance appears to have been made.

But the Arians were not content with their peaceable re-establishment in their former station. However they might attempt to harmonize their doctrines with the belief of their adversaries, by their vindictive aggression on the opposite party they belied their pretensions to moderation and the love of peace. Eusebius, whom Constantine had before publicly denounced in no measured terms, grew rapidly into favor. The complete dominion, which from this time he appears to have exercised over the mind of Constantine, confirms the natural suspicion that the opinions of the emperor were by no means formed by his own independent judgment, but entirely governed by the Christian teacher who might obtain his favor. Eusebius seems to have succeeded to the influence exercised with so much wisdom and temper by Hosius of Cordova. He became Bishop of Constantinople, and was the companion of Constantine in his visits to Jerusalem;¹ and the high estimation in which the emperor held also Eusebius of Cæsarea, according to the statements made, and the documents ostentatiously preserved by that writer in his ecclesiastical history, could not but contribute to the growing ascendancy of Arianism. They were in possession of some of the most important dioceses in Asia; they were ambitious of establishing their supremacy in Antioch.

The suspicious brevity with which Eusebius glides over the early part of this transaction, which his personal vanity could not allow him to omit, confirms the

¹ Theodoret, i. 2.

statement of their adversaries, as to the unjustifiable means employed by the Arians to attain this object. Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Theognis, passed through Antioch on their way to Jerusalem. On their return, they summoned Eustathius, the Bishop of Antioch, whose character had hitherto been blameless, to answer before a hastily assembled council of bishops, on two distinct charges of immorality and heresy. The unseemly practice of bringing forward women of disreputable character to charge men of high station in the Church with incontinency, formerly employed by the Heathens to calumniate the Christians, was now adopted by the reckless hostility of Christian faction. The accusation of a prostitute against Eustathius, of having been the father of her child, is said afterwards to have been completely disproved. The heresy with which Eustathius was charged was that of Sabellianism, the usual imputation of the Arians against the Trinitarians of the opposite creed. Two Arian bishops having occupied the see of Antioch but for a very short time, an attempt was made to remove Eusebius of Cæsarea to that diocese, no doubt to overawe by the high reputation of his talents, or to conciliate the Eustathian party. Eusebius, with the flattering approbation of the emperor, declined the dangerous post. Eustathius was deposed, and banished, by the imperial edict, to Thrace; but the attachment, at least of a large part, of the Christian population of Antioch refused to acknowledge the authority of the tribunal, or the justice of the sentence. The city was divided into two fierce and hostile factions: they were on the verge of civil war; and Antioch, where the Christians had first formed themselves into a separate community, but for the vigorous

A.D. 328.
Conduct of
the Arian
prelates in
Antioch.

interference of the civil power and the timely appearance of an imperial commissioner, might have witnessed the first blood shed, at least in the East, in a Christian quarrel.

It is impossible to calculate how far the authority and influence of the Syrian bishops, with the avowed countenance of the emperor (for Constantius, the son of Constantine, was an adherent of the Arian opinions), might have subdued the zeal of the orthodox party. It is possible, that, but for the rise of one inflexible and indomitable antagonist, the question might either have sunk to rest, or the Christian world acquiesced, at least the East, in a vague and mitigated Arianism.

Athanasius had been raised by the discernment of Alexander to a station of confidence and dignity. He had filled the office of secretary Athanasius. to the Alexandrian prelate. In the Council of Nicæa he had borne a distinguished part, and his zeal and talents designated him at once as the head of the Trinitarian party. On the death of Alexander, the universal voice of the predominant anti-Arians demanded the elevation of Athanasius. In vain he attempted to conceal himself, and to escape the dangerous honor. At thirty years of age, Athanasius was placed A.D. 326. on the episcopal throne of the see, which ranked with Antioch, and afterwards with Constantinople, as the most important spiritual charge in the East.¹

The imperial mandate was issued to receive Arius and his followers within the pale of the Christian communion.² But Constantine found, to his astonishment,

¹ The Arians asserted this election to have been carried by the irregular violence of a few bishops, contrary to the declared suffrages of the majority.

² Athanas., *Apol. contra Ar. Soz.* ii. 22.

that an imperial edict, which would have been obeyed in trembling submission from one end of the Roman empire to the other, even if it had enacted a complete political revolution, or endangered the property and privileges of thousands, was received with deliberate and steady disregard by a single Christian bishop. During two reigns, Athanasius contested the authority of the emperor. He endured persecution, calumny, exile; his life was frequently endangered in defence of one single tenet; and that, it may be permitted to say, the most purely intellectual, and apparently the most remote from the ordinary passions of man: he confronted martyrdom, not for the broad and palpable distinction between Christianity and Heathenism, but for fine and subtle expressions of the Christian creed.¹ He began and continued the contest, not for the toleration, but for the supremacy, of his own opinions.

Neither party, in truth, could now yield without the humiliating acknowledgment that all their contest had been on unimportant and unessential points. The passions and the interests, as well as the conscience, were committed in the strife. The severe and uncompromising temper of Athanasius, no doubt, gave some advantage to his jealous and watchful antagonists. Criminal charges began to multiply against a prelate who was thus fallen in the imperial favor.² They

¹ I am not persuaded, either by the powerful eloquence of Athanasius himself, or by his able modern apologist, Möhler, that the opinions, at least, of the Syrian Semi-Arians were so utterly irreconcilable with the orthodoxy of Athanasius, or likely to produce such fatal consequences to the general system of Christianity as are extorted from them by the keen theological precision of Athanasius.

² Theodoret mentions one of these customary charges of licentiousness, in which a woman of bad character accused Athanasius of violating her chastity. Athanasius was silent; while one of his friends, with assumed indig-

were assiduously instilled into the ears of Constantine; yet the extreme frivolousness of some of these accusations, and the triumphant refutation of the more material charges, before a tribunal of his enemies, establish, undeniably, the unblemished virtue of Athanasius.¹ He was charged with taxing the city to provide linen vestments for the clergy, and with treasonable correspondence with an enemy of the emperor. Upon this accusation, he was summoned to Nicomedia, and acquitted by the emperor himself. He was charged as having authorized the profanation of the holy vessels, and the sacred books, in a church in the Marcotis, a part of his diocese. A certain Ischyrras had assumed the office of presbyter, without ordination. Macarius, who was sent by Athanasius to prohibit his officiating in his usurped dignity, was accused by Ischyrras of overthrowing the altar, breaking the cup, and burning the Scriptures. It is not impossible that the indiscreet zeal of an inferior may have thought it right to destroy sacred vessels thus profaned by unhallowed hands. But from Athanasius himself the charge recoiled without the least injury. But a darker charge remained behind,—comprehending two crimes, probably in those days looked upon with equal abhorrence,—magic

nation, demanded, “Do you accuse *me* of this crime?” — “Yes,” replied the woman, supposing him to be Athanasius, of whose person she was ignorant, “*you* were the violator of my chastity.” — I. i. c. 30.

¹ It is remarkable how little stress is laid on the persecutions which Athanasius is accused of having carried on through the civil authority. “Accusatus præterea est de injuriis, violentiâ, cæde, atque ipsâ episcoporum interfectione. Quique etiam diebus sacratissimis paschæ tyrannico more sæviens. Ducibus atque Comitibus junctus: quique propter ipsam aliquos in custodiâ recludebant, aliquos vero verberibus flagellisque vexabant, cæteros diversis tormentis ad communionem ejus sacrilegam adigebant.” These charges neither seem to have been pressed nor refuted, as half so important as the act of sacrilege. See the protest of the Arian bishops at Sardica, in Hilarii Oper. Hist. Fragm. iii. c. 6. See also the accusations of violence on his return to Alexandria. Ibid. 8.

and murder. The enemies of Athanasius produced a human hand said to be that of Arsenius, a bishop attached to the Meletian heresy, who had disappeared from Egypt in a suspicious manner. The hand of the murdered bishop had been kept by Athanasius for unhallowed purposes of witchcraft. In vain the emissaries of Athanasius sought for Arsenius in Egypt, though he was known to be concealed in that country; but the superior and one of the monks of a monastery were seized, and compelled to confess that he was still living, and had lain hid in their sanctuary. Yet the charge was not abandoned: it impended for more than two years over the head of Athanasius.

A council, chiefly formed of the enemies of Athanasius, was summoned at Tyre. It was intimated to the Alexandrian prelate, that, if he refused to appear before the tribunal, he would be brought by force.

Synod of Tyre.
A.D. 335. Athanasius stood before the tribunal. He was arraigned on this charge: the hand was produced. To the astonishment of the court, Athanasius calmly demanded whether those present were acquainted with the person of Arsenius. He had been well known to many. A man was suddenly brought into the court with his whole person folded in his mantle. Athanasius uncovered the head of the witness. He was at once recognized as the murdered Arsenius. Still the severed hand lay before them, and the adversaries of Athanasius expected to convict him of having mutilated the victim of his jealousy. Athanasius lifted up the mantle on one side, and showed the right hand: he lifted up the other, and showed the left. In a calm tone of sarcasm he observed, that the Creator had bestowed two hands on man: it was for his enemies to explain how Arsenius had possessed a third.¹ A for-

¹ Theodoret, i. 30.

tunate accident had brought Arsenius to Tyre: he had been discovered by the friends of Athanasius. Though he denied his name, he was known by the Bishop of Tyre; and this dramatic scene had been arranged as the most effective means of exposing the malice of the prelate's enemies. His discomfited accusers fled in the confusion.

The implacable enemies of Athanasius were constrained to fall back upon the other exploded charge,—the profanation of the sacred vessels by Macarius. A commission of inquiry had been issued, who conducted themselves, according to the statement of the friends of Athanasius, with the utmost violence and partiality. On their report, the bishop of the important city of Alexandria was deposed from his dignity. But Athanasius bowed not beneath the storm. He appears to have been a master in what may be called, without disrespect, theatrical effect. As the emperor Athanasius
in Constantinople. rode through the city of Constantinople, he was arrested by the sudden appearance of a train of ecclesiastics, in the midst of which was Athanasius. The offended emperor, with a look of silent contempt, urged his horse onward. “God,” said the prelate, with a loud voice, “shall judge between thee and me, since thou thus espoucest the cause of my calumniators. I demand only that my enemies be summoned, and my cause heard in the imperial presence.” The emperor admitted the justice of his petition: the accusers of Athanasius were commanded to appear in Constantinople. Six of them, including the two Eusebii, obeyed the mandate.

But a new charge, on a subject skilfully chosen to awaken the jealousy of the emperor, counteracted the influence which might have been obtained by the elo-

quence or the guiltlessness of Athanasius. It is remarkable that an accusation of a very similar nature should have caused the capital punishment of the most distinguished among the Heathen philosophic party, and the exile of the most eminent Christian prelate. Constantinople entirely depended for the supply of corn upon foreign importation. One-half of Africa, including Egypt, was assigned to the maintenance of the new capital, while the Western division alone remained for Rome. At some period during the later years of Constantine, the adverse winds detained the Alexandrian fleet, and famine began to afflict the inhabitants of the city. The populace was in tumult; the government looked anxiously for means to allay the dangerous ferment. The Christian party had seen with jealousy and alarm the influence which a Heathen philosopher, named Sopater, had obtained over the mind of Constantine.¹ Sopater was a native of Apamea, the scholar of Iamblichus. The emperor took great delight in his society, and was thus in danger of being perverted, if not to Heathenism, to that high Platonic indifferentism which would leave the two religions on terms of perfect equality. Sopater was seen seated on public occasions by the emperor's side; and boasted, it was said, that the dissolution of Heathenism would be arrested by his authority. During the famine, the emperor entered the theatre: instead of the usual acclamations,

¹ Zosimus, ii. 40; Sozom. 1-5; Eunap. in *Ædes*. p. 21-25; edit. Boissonade. Suidas, voc. Σώπατρος. If we are to believe Eunapius, the Christians might reasonably take alarm at the intimacy of Constantine with Sopater: ὁ μὲν βασιλεὺς ἐαλῶκει τε ὑπ' αὐτῷ καὶ δημοσίᾳ σύνεδρον εἶχεν, εἰς τὸν δεξιὸν καθίζων τοπὸν. ὃ καὶ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἰδεῖν ἄπιστον· οἱ δὲ παραδυναστεύοντες (the Christians, a remarkable admission of their influence!) ῥηγνύμενοι τῷ φθόνῳ πρὸς βασιλείαν ἄρτι φιλοσοφεῖν μετὰ μανθάνουσαν. — p. 21.

he was received with a dull and melancholy silence. The enemies of Sopater seized the opportunity of accusing the philosopher of magic: his unlawful arts had bound the winds in the adverse quarter. If the emperor did not, the populace would readily, believe him to be the cause of all their calamities. He was sacrificed to the popularity of the emperor: the order for his decapitation was hastily issued, and promptly executed.

In the same spirit which caused the death of the Heathen philosopher, Athanasius was accused of threatening to force the emperor to his own measures, by stopping the supplies of corn from the port of Alexandria. Constantine listened with jealous credulity to the charge. The danger of leaving the power of starving the capital in the hands of one who might become hostile to the Government, touched the pride of the emperor in the tenderest point. Athanasius was banished to the remote city of Treves.

A. D. 336,
February.
Banishment
of Athanasius
to Treves

But neither the exile of Athanasius, nor the unqualified — his enemies, of course, asserted insincere or hypocritical — acceptance of the Nicene Creed by Arius himself, allayed the differences. The presence of Arius in Alexandria had been the cause of new dissensions. He was recalled to Constantinople, where a council had been held, in which the Arian party maintained and abused their predominance. But Alexander, the Bishop of Constantinople, still firmly resisted the reception of Arius into the orthodox communion. Affairs were hastening to a crisis. The Arians, with the authority of the emperor on their side, threatened to force their way into the church, and to compel the admission of their champion.

Arius in Constantinople.

The Catholics, the weaker party, had recourse to prayer: the Arians already raised the voice of triumph. While Alexander was prostrate at the altar, Arius was borne through the wondering city in a kind of ovation, surrounded by his friends, and welcomed with loud acclamations by his own party. As he passed the porphyry column, he was forced to retire into a house to relieve his natural wants. His return was anxiously expected, but in vain: he was found dead, as his antagonists declared; his bowels had burst out, and relieved the Church from the presence of the obstinate heretic. We cannot wonder, that, at such a period of excitement, the Catholics, in that well-timed incident, recognized a direct providential interference in their favor. It was ascribed to the prevailing prayers of Alexander and his clergy. Under the specious pretext of a thanksgiving for the deliverance of the Church from the imminent peril of external violence, the bishop prepared a solemn service. Athanasius, in a public epistle, alludes to the fate of Judas, which had befallen the traitor to the co-equal dignity of the Son. His hollow charity ill disguises his secret triumph.¹

Whatever effect the death of Arius might produce upon the mind of Constantine, it caused no mitigation in his unfavorable opinion of Athanasius. He contemptuously rejected the petitions which were sent from Alexandria to solicit his re-instatement; he refused to recall that "proud, turbulent, obstinate, and intractable" prelate. It was not till he was on his

¹ It was a standing argument of Athanasius, that the death of Arius was a sufficient refutation of his heresy.

Εἰς γὰρ τελείαν κατάγνωσιν τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Ἀρειανῶν, αὐτάρκης ἡ περὶ τοῦ θανάτου Ἀρείου γενομένη παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου κρίσις.—Dei. Epist. ad Monachos, 3. Op. v. i. 344.

death-bed that his consent was hardly extorted for this act of mercy, or rather of justice.

The baptism of Constantine on his death-bed is one of those questions which has involved ecclesiastical historians in inextricable embarrassment. The fact is indisputable: it rests on the united authority of the Greek and Latin writers. Though he had so openly espoused the cause of Christianity; though he had involved himself so deeply in the interests of the Christian community, attended on their worship, presided,¹ or at least sanctioned their councils with his presence, and had been constantly surrounded by the Christian clergy,—the emperor had still deferred till the very close of his life his formal reception into the Christian Church, the ablution of his sins, the admission to the privileges and hopes of the Christian, by that indispensable rite of baptism.² There seems but one plain solution of this difficulty. The emperor constantly maintained a kind of superiority over the Christian part of his subjects. It was still rather the lofty and impartial condescension of a protector, than the spiritual equality of the proselyte.

Baptism of
Constantine.

¹ If we are to believe Eusebius, he was a preacher of Christianity,—a preacher on some of its most profound and mysterious doctrines. I cannot help suspecting that the bishop has transferred some of his own sermons to the emperor. — V. C. iv. 29. Compare Stanley, p. 233.

² Mosheim's observations on the Christianity of Constantine are characterized by his usual good sense and judgment — *De Rebus Christ. antè Const. Magnum*, p. 965. I extract only a few sentences: "Erat primis post victum Maxentium annis in animo ejus cum omnis religionis, tum Christianæ imprimis, parum sana et propius à Græcorum et Romanorum opinione remota notio. Nescius enim salutis et beneficiorum à Christo humano generi partorum, Christum Deum esse putabat, qui cultorum suorum fidem et diligentiam felicitate hujus vitæ, rebusque secundis comparare, hostes vero et contemptores mox pœnis, malisque omnis generis afficere potuit. . . . Ita sensim de vera religionis Christianæ indole . . . edoctus stultitiam et deformitatem antiquarum superstitionum clarius perspiciebat, et Christo uni sincere nomen dabat." — pp. 977, 978.

He still asserted, and in many cases exercised, the privilege of that high indifferentism which ruled his conduct by his own will or judgment, rather than by the precepts of a severe and definite religion. He was reluctant — though generally convinced of the truth, and disposed to recognize the superiority, of the Christian religion — to commit himself by the irrevocable act of initiation. He may have been still more unwilling to sever himself entirely from the Heathen majority of his subjects, lest by such a step, in some sudden yet always possible crisis, he might shake their allegiance. In short, he would not surrender any part of his dignity as emperor of the world, especially as he might suppose that, even if necessary to his salvation as a Christian, he could command at any time the advantages of baptism. On the other hand, the

A. D. 337.

Christians, then far more pliant than when their undisputed authority ruled the minds of monarchs with absolute sway, hardly emerged from persecution, struggling for a still-contested supremacy, divided among themselves, and each section courting the favor of the emperor, were glad to obtain an imperial convert on his own terms. In constant hope that the emperor himself would take this decisive step, they were too prudent or too cautious to urge it with impetuous or unnecessary vehemence. He was not so entirely their own, but that he might still be estranged by indiscretion or intemperance; he would gradually become more enlightened; and they were content to wait in humble patience, till Providence, who had raised up this powerful protector, should render him fully and exclusively and openly their own.

If it be difficult to determine the extent to which Constantine proceeded in the establishment of Chris-

tianity, it is even more perplexing to estimate how far he exerted the imperial authority in the abolition of Paganism. Conflicting evidence encounters us at every point. Eusebius, in three distinct passages in his "Life of Constantine," asserts that he prohibited sacrifice;¹ that he issued two laws to prohibit, both in the city and in the country, the pollutions of the old idolatry, the setting-up of statues, divinations, and other unlawful practices, — and to command the total abolition of sacrifice;² that throughout the Roman empire the "doors of idolatry" were closed to the people and to the army, and every kind of sacrifice was prohibited.³ Theodoret asserts⁴ that Constantine prohibited sacrifice, and, though he did not destroy, shut up all the temples. In a passage of his Panegyric,⁵ Eusebius asserts that the emperor sent two officers into every part of the empire, who forced the priests to surrender up the statues of their gods, which, having been despoiled of their ornaments, were melted or destroyed. These strong assertions of Eusebius are, to a certain extent, confirmed by expressions in the laws of Constantine's successors, especially one of Constans, which appeals to an edict of his father Constantine, which prohibited sacrifice.⁶

¹ Θύειν ἀπείρητο. — ii. 44.

² Δύο κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐπέμποντο νόμοι· ὁ μὲν εἰργων τὰ μυστὰ τῆς κατὰ πόλεις καὶ χώρας τὸ παλαιὸν συντελουμένης εἰδωλολατρίας, ὥς μήτε ἐγέοσις ξοάνων ποιεῖσθαι τολμᾶν, μήτε μαντείας καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις περιεργίαις ἐπιχειρεῖν, μήτε μὴν θύειν καθόλου μηδὲνα. — ii. 45.

³ Καθόλου, δε τοῖς ὑπὸ τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῇ δήμοις τε καὶ στρατιωτικοῖς, πύλαι ἀπεκλείοντο εἰδωλολατρίας, θυσίας τε τρόπος ἀπηγορεύετο πᾶς. — iv. 23. διεκωλύετο μὲν θύειν εἰδώλους. — ibid. 25. δήμοις may mean the magistracy, the public ceremonial.

⁴ Theodoret, vi. 21. Compare Sozomen, iii. 17; Orosius, vii. 28.

⁵ De Laudib. Constant. i. 8.

⁶ "Cesset superstitio, sacrificiorum aboleatur insania. Nam quicunque

On the other hand, Eusebius himself inserts, and ascribes to a date posterior to some of these laws, documents, which he professes to have seen in Constantine's own hand, proclaiming the most impartial toleration to the Pagans, and deprecating compulsion in religious matters. "Let all enjoy the same peace; let no one disturb another in his religious worship; let each act as he thinks fit; let those who withhold their obedience from Thee (it is an address to the Deity), have their temples of falsehood if they think right."¹ He exhorts to mutual charity, and declares, "It is a very different thing willingly to submit to trials for the sake of immortal life, and to force others by penalties to embrace one faith."² These generous sentiments, if Constantine were issuing edicts to close the temples, and prohibiting the sacred rites of his Pagan subjects, had been the grossest hypocrisy. The laws against the soothsayers spoke, as was before shown, the same tolerant language with regard to the public ceremony of the religion.³ Can the victory over Licinius so entirely have changed the policy of Constantine, as to have induced him to prohibit altogether rites which but a few years before he had sanctioned by his authority?

contra legem divi Principis, parentis nostri, et hanc nostræ mansuetudinis jussionem ausus fuerit sacrificia celebrare, competens in eum vindicta, et præsens sententia exseratur."—Cod. Theodos. xvi. 10. 2. See likewise the note of Godefroy.

¹ Ὅμοιαν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν οἱ πλανώμενοι χαίροντες λαμβανέτωσαν εἰρήνης τε καὶ ἡσυχίας ἀπόλαυσιν. . . . Μηδεὶς τὸν ἕτερον παρεῶν νοχλεῖ ἕκαστος ὑπερ ἢ ψυχὴν βούλεται τοῦτο καὶ πραττέτω. . . . Οἱ δ' ἑαυτοὺς ἀφέλκοντες, ἐχόντων βουλόμενοι τὰ τῆς ψευδόλογίας τεμένη. — Vit. Const. ii. 26.

² Ἄλλο γὰρ ἐστὶ, τὸν ὑπὲρ ἀθανασίας ὄθλον ἐκουσίως ἐπαναυρεῖσθαι, ἄλλο τὸ μετὰ τιμωρίας ἐπαναγκάζειν. — c. 60.

³ "Qui vero id vobis existimatis conducere, adite aras publicas atque delubra et consuetudinis vestræ celebrate solemn'a; nec enim prohibemus præteritæ usurpationis officia libera luce tractari." — Cod. Theodos. xvi. 10.

The Pagan writers, who are not scrupulous in their charges against the memory of Constantine, and dwell with bitter resentment on all his overt acts of hostility to the ancient religion, do not accuse him of these direct encroachments on Paganism. Neither Julian nor Zosimus lay this to his charge. Libanius distinctly asserts that the temples were left open and undisturbed during his reign, and that Paganism remained unchanged.¹

All historical records strongly confirm the opinion that Paganism was openly professed; its temples restored;² its rites celebrated; neither was its priesthood degraded from their immunities, nor the estates belonging to the temples generally alienated; in short, that it was the public religion of a great part of the empire, and still confronted Christianity, if not on equal terms, still with pertinacious resistance, down to the reign of Theodosius, and even that of his sons. Constantine himself, though he neither offered sacrifices, nor consulted the Sibylline books, nor would go up to the temple of the Capitoline Jupiter with the senate and the people, performed, nevertheless, some of the functions, at least did not disdain the appellation, of Supreme Pontiff.³

Perhaps we may safely adopt the following conclu-

¹ Τῆς κατὰ νόμον δὲ θεραπείας ἐκίνησεν οὐδὲ ἔν. — Pro Templis, vol. ii. p. 162.

Libanius adds that Constantius, on a certain change of circumstances, *first* prohibited sacrifice. Compare also Orat. 26; Julian Orat. vii. p. 424.

² See, in Gruter, p. 100, n. 6, the inscription on the restoration of the Temple of Concord, during the consulship of Paulinus (A.C. 331, 332), by the authority of the prefect of the city, and S. P. Q. R. Altars were erected to other Pagan gods. Compare Beugnot, i. 106.

M. Beugnot, in his *Destruction du Paganisme en Occident*, has collected with great industry the proofs of this fact, from inscriptions, medals, and other of the more minute contemporary memorials.

³ There is a medal extant of Constantine as Supreme Pontiff.

sions. There were two kinds of sacrifices abolished by Constantine,—I. The private sacrifices, connected with unlawful acts of theurgy and of magic; those midnight offerings to the powers of darkness, which, in themselves, were illegal, and led to scenes of unhallowed license.¹ II. Those which might be considered the state sacrifices offered by the emperor himself, or by his representatives in his name, either in the cities or in the army. Though Constantine advanced many Christians to offices of trust, and no doubt many who were ambitious of such offices conformed to the religion of the emperor, probably most of the high dignities of the state were held by Pagans. An edict might be required to induce them to depart from the customary usage of sacrifice, which with the Christian officers would quietly fall into desuetude.² But still, the sacrifices made by the priesthood, at the expense of the sacerdotal establishments, and out of their own estates,—though in some instances these estates were seized by Constantine, and the sacerdotal colleges reduced to poverty,—and the *public* sacrifices, offered by the piety of distinguished individuals, would be made as usual. In the capital there can be little doubt that sacrifices were offered, in the name

¹ See the laws relating to divination, above, p. 296.

M. la Bastie and M. Beugnot would consider the terms τὰ μυστὰ τῇ εἰδωλολατρίας, in the rescript of Constantine, and the “*insana superstitio*” of the law of Constans, to refer exclusively to these nocturnal and forbidden sacrifices. M. Beugnot has observed, that Constantine always uses respectful and courteous language concerning Paganism. “*Vetus observantia, vetus consuetudo; templorum solemnitas; consuetudinis gentilitiæ solemnitas.*” The laws of the later emperors employ very different terms. “*Error; dementia; error veterum; profanus ritus; sacrilegus ritus; nefarius ritus; superstitio Pagana, damnabilis, damnata, deterrima, impia; funestæ superstitionis errores; stolidus Paganorum error.*”—Cod. Theodos. t. v. p. 255. Beugnot, tom. i. p. 80.

² The prohibition to the δῆμοι and στρατιωτικοὶ (see quotation above from Eusebius) refers, I conceive, to these.

of the senate and people of Rome, till a much later period.

Christianity may now be said to have ascended the imperial throne: with the single exception of Legal establishment of Christianity. Julian, from this period the monarchs of the Roman empire professed the religion of the Gospel. This important crisis in the history of Christianity almost forcibly arrests the attention to contemplate the change wrought in Christianity by its advancement into a dominant power in the state; and the change in the condition of mankind up to this period, attributable to the direct authority or indirect Effects of this on the religion. influence of the new religion. By ceasing to exist as a separate community, and by advancing its pretensions to influence the general government of mankind, Christianity, to a certain extent, forfeited its independence. It could not but submit to these laws, framed, as it might seem, with its own concurrent voice. It was no longer a republic, governed exclusively, as far at least as its religious concerns, by its own internal polity. The interference of the civil power in some of its most private affairs, the promulgation of its canons, and even in some cases the election of its bishops, by the state, was the price which it must inevitably pay for its association with the ruling power. The natural satisfaction, the more than pardonable triumph, in seeing the emperor of the world a suppliant with themselves at the foot of the cross, would blind the Christian world, in general, to these consequences of their more exalted position. The more ardent and unworldly would fondly suppose, that a Christian emperor would always be actuated by Christian motives; and that the imperial authority, instead of making aggressions on Christian inde-

pendence, would rather bow in humble submission to its acknowledged dominion. His main object would be to develop the energies of the new religion in the amplest freedom, and allow them full scope in the subjugation of the world.

The emperor as little anticipated, that he was introducing, as an antagonistic power, an On the civil power. inextinguishable principle of liberty into the administration of human affairs. This liberty was based on deeper foundations than the hereditary freedom of the ancient republics. It appealed to a tribunal higher than any which could exist upon earth. This antagonistic principle of independence, however at times apparently crushed, and submitting to voluntary slavery, or even lending itself to be the instrument of arbitrary despotism, was inherent in the new religion, and would not cease till it had asserted, and for a considerable period exercised, an authority superior to that of the civil government. Already in Athanasius might be seen the one subject of Constantine who dared to resist his will. From Athanasius, who owned himself a subject, but with inflexible adherence to his own opinions, to Ambrose, who rebuked the great Theodosius, and from Ambrose up to the pope who set his foot on the neck of the prostrate emperor, the progress was slow, but natural and certain. In this profound prostration of the human mind and the total extinction of the old sentiments of Roman liberty, in the adumbration of the world by what assumed the pomp and the language of an Asiatic despotism, it is impossible to calculate the latent as well as open effect of this moral resistance. In Constantinople, indeed, and in the East, the clergy never obtained sufficient power to be for-

midable to the civil authority; their feuds too often brought them in a sort of moral servitude to the foot of the throne: still the Christian, and the Christian alone, throughout this long period of human degradation breathed an atmosphere of moral freedom which raised him above the general level of servile debasement.

During the reign of Constantine, Christianity had made a rapid advance, no doubt in the number of its proselytes, as well as in its external position. It was not yet the established religion of the empire. It did not as yet stand forward as the new religion adapted to the new order of things, as a part of the great simultaneous change, which gave to the Roman world a new capital, a new system of government, and, in some important instances, a new jurisprudence. Yet having sprung up at once, under the royal favor, to a perfect equality with the prevailing Heathenism, the mere manifestation of that favor, where the antagonistic religion hung so loose upon the minds of men, gave it much of the power and authority of a dominant faith. The religion of the emperor would soon become that of the court; and, by somewhat slower degrees, that of the empire. At present, however, as we have seen, little open aggression took place upon Paganism. The few temples which were closed were insulated cases, and condemned as offensive to public morality. In general, the edifices stood in all their former majesty; for as yet the ordinary process of dissolution, from neglect or decay, could have produced little effect. The difference was, that the Christian churches began to assume a more stately and imposing form. In the new capital, they surpassed in grandeur, and probably

in decoration, the Pagan temples which belonged to old Byzantium. The immunities granted to the Christian clergy only placed them on the same level with the Pagan priesthood. The pontifical offices were still held by the distinguished men of the state: the emperor himself was long the chief pontiff; but the religious office had become a kind of appendage to the temporal dignity. The Christian prelates were constantly admitted, in virtue of their office, to the imperial presence.

On the state of society at large, on its different forms and gradations, little impression had as yet been made by Christianity. The Christians were still a separate people; Christian literature was exclusively religious, and addressed, excepting in its apologies or its published exhortations against Paganism, to the initiate alone. Its language would be unintelligible to those uninstructed in Christian theology. Yet the general legislation of Constantine, independent of those edicts which concerned the Christian community, bears some evidence of the silent underworking of Christian opinion.

Effect of legal establishment of Christianity on society.
Laws relating to Sundays.

The rescript, indeed, for the religious observance of the Sunday, which enjoined the suspension of all public business and private labor, except that of agriculture, was enacted, according to the apparent terms of the decree, for the whole Roman empire. Yet, unless we had direct proof that the decree set forth the Christian reason for the sanctity of the day, it may be doubted whether the act would not be received by the greater part of the empire, as merely adding one more festival to the *Fasti* of the empire. as proceeding entirely from the will of the emperor, or even grounded on his authority as Supreme Pontiff,

by which he had the plenary power of appointing holy-days.¹ In fact, as we have before observed, the day of the Sun would be willingly hallowed by almost all the Pagan world, especially that part which had admitted any tendency towards the Oriental theology.

Where the legislation of Constantine was of a humaner cast, it would be unjust not to admit the influence of Christian opinions, spreading even beyond the immediate circle of the Christian community, as at least a concurrent cause of the improvement. In one remarkable instance, there is direct authority that a certain measure was adopted by the advice of an influential Christian. During the period of anarchy and confusion which preceded the universal empire of Constantine, the misery had been so great, particularly in Africa and Italy, that the sale of infants for slaves, their exposure, and even infanticide, had become fearfully common. Constantine issued an edict, in which he declared that the emperor should be considered the father of all such children. It was a cruelty, irreconcilable with the spirit of the times, to permit any subjects of the empire to perish of starvation, or to be reduced to any unworthy action by actual hunger. Funds were assigned for the food and clothing of such children as the parents should declare themselves unable to support, partly on the imperial revenues, partly on the revenues of the neighboring cities. As this measure did not prevent the sale of children, parents were declared incapable of reclaiming children thus sold, unless they paid a reasonable price for their enfranchisement.² Children

Laws tending
to humanity.

¹ Cod. Theod. l. 2, tit. 8; l. 8, tit. 8; l. 5, tit. 3. Cod. Just. iii. 12. Euseb., Vit. Const. 18, 19, 20. Sozom. i. 8.

² Codex. Theodos. v. vii. 1. On the exposure of children at this time, compare Lactantius, D. I. ii. 20

which had been exposed could not be reclaimed from those who had received them into their families, whether by adoption or as slaves. Whatever may have been the wisdom, the humanity of these ordinances is unquestionable. They are said to have been issued by the advice of Lactantius, to whom had been intrusted the education of Crispus, the son of Constantine.

Child-stealing, for the purpose of selling the children
Concerning for slaves, was visited with a penalty which
slavery. both in its nature and barbarity retained the
stamp of the old Roman manners. The criminal was
condemned to the amphitheatre, either to be devoured
by wild beasts or exhibited as a gladiator. Christianity had not as yet allayed the passion for these
savage amusements of the Roman people; yet, in
conjunction with the somewhat milder manners of the
East, it excluded gladiatorial exhibitions from the new
capital. The Grecian amusements of the theatre and
of the chariot-race satisfied the populace of Constanti-
nople. Whatever might be the improved condition
of the slaves within the Christian community, the
tone of legislation preserves the same broad and dis-
tinct line of demarcation between the two classes of
society. The master, indeed, was deprived of the
arbitrary power of life and death. The death of a
slave under torture, or any excessive severity of pun-
ishment, was punishable as homicide; but, if he died
under a *moderate* chastisement, the master was not
responsible. In the distribution of the royal domains,
care was to be taken not to divide the families of the
prædial slaves. It is a cruelty, says the law, to
separate parents and children, brothers and sisters,

husbands and wives.¹ But marriages of free women with slaves were punishable with death: the children of such unions were indeed free, but could not inherit their mothers' property. The person of dignity and station, who had children by a marriage contracted with a woman of base condition, could not make a testament in their favor; even purchases made in their names or for their benefit might be claimed by the legitimate heirs. The base condition comprehended not only slaves, but freed women, actresses, tavern-keepers, and their daughters, as well as those of courtesans or gladiators. Slaves who were concerned in the seduction of their masters' children were to be burned alive without distinction of sex. The barbarity of this punishment rather proves the savage manners of the time than the inferior condition of the slave; for the receivers of the royal domains who were convicted of depredation of fraud were condemned to the same penalty.²

It can scarcely be doubted, that the stricter moral tone of Constantine's legislation more or less remotely emanated from Christianity. Law against rape and abduction. The laws against rape and seduction were framed with so much rigor, as probably to make their general execution difficult, if not impracticable.³ The ravisher

¹ Cod. Theod. l. v. t. 25. On the whole question of the effect of Christianity on slavery, read the third volume of the excellent work of Wallen, *Sur l'Esclavage dans l'Antiquité*.

² Manumission, which was performed under the sanction of a religious ceremonial in the Heathen temples, might now be performed in the church: the clergy might manumit their slaves, in the presence of the church. — Cod. Theod. iv. 7, 1.

This law must have connected Christianity in the general sentiment with the emancipation of slaves. Compare Sozomen, i. 9, who says that Constantine issued three laws on the subject. The manumission took place publicly at Easter. — Greg. Nyss.

³ Cod. Theod. l. iv. t. 24.

had before escaped with impunity: if the injured party did not prosecute him for his crime, she had the right of demanding reparation by marriage. By the law of Constantine, the consent of the female made her an accomplice in the crime: she was amenable to the same penalty. What that penalty was is not quite clear; but it seems that the ravisher was exposed to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre. Even where the female had suffered forcible abduction, she had to acquit herself of all suspicion of consent, either from levity of manner, or want of proper vigilance. Those pests of society, the panders, who abused the confidence of parents, and made a traffic of the virtue of their daughters, were in the same spirit condemned to a punishment so horrible, as, no doubt, more frequently to insure their impunity: melted lead was to be poured down their throats. Parents who did not prosecute such offences were banished, and their property confiscated. It is not, however, so much the severity of the punishments, indicating a stronger abhorrence of the crime, as the social and moral evils of which it took cognizance, which shows the remoter workings of a sterner moral principle. A religion which requires of its followers a strict, as regards the Christianity of this period, it may be said an ascetic rigor, desires to enforce on the mass of mankind by the power of the law that which it cannot effect by the more legitimate and permanent means of moral influence. In a small community where the law is the echo of the public sentiment, or where it rests on an acknowledged divine authority, it may advance further into the province of morality, and extend its

Law against
adultery.

provisions into every relation of society. The Mosaic law, which, simultaneously with

the Christian spirit, began to enter into the legislation of the Christian emperors, in its fearful penalties imposed upon the illicit commerce of the sexes, concurred with the rigorous jealousy of the Asiatic tribes of that region concerning the honor of their women. But when the laws of Constantine suddenly classed the crime of adultery with those of poison and assassination, and declared it a capital offence, it may be doubted whether any improvement ensued, or was likely to ensue, in the public morals. Unless Christianity had already greatly corrected the general licentiousness of the Roman world, not merely within but without its pale, it may safely be affirmed that the general and impartial execution of such a statute was impossible.¹ The severity of the law against the breach of conjugal fidelity was accompa- Concerning
divorce. nished with strong restrictions upon the facility of divorce. Three crimes alone, in the husband, justified the wife in demanding a legal separation, — homicide, poisoning, or the violation of sepulchres. This latter crime was, apparently, very frequent, and looked upon with great abhorrence.² In these cases, the wife recovered her dowry; if she separated for any other cause, she forfeited all to a single needle, and was liable to perpetual banishment.³ The husband, in order to obtain a divorce, must convict his

¹ It may be admitted, as some evidence of the inefficiency of this law, that in the next reign the penalties were actually aggravated. The criminals were condemned either to be burned alive, or sewed up in a sack and cast into the sea.

² Codex. Theodos. iii. 16, 1.

³ The law of Constantine and Constans, which made intermarriage with a niece a capital crime, is supposed by Godefroy to have been a local act, directed against the laxity of Syrian morals in this respect. — Cod. Theod. iii. 12, 1. The law issued at Rome, prohibiting intermarriage with the sister of a deceased wife, annulled the marriage, and bastardized the children — iii. 12, 2.

wife of poisoning, adultery, or keeping notoriously infamous company. In all other cases, he restored the whole of the dowry. If he married again, the former wife, thus illegally cast off, might claim his whole property, and even the dowry of the second wife. These impediments to the dissolution of the marriage tie, the facility of which experience and reason concur in denouncing as destructive of social virtue and of domestic happiness, with penalties affecting the property rather than the person, were more likely to have a favorable and extensive operation than the sanguinary proscription of adultery. Marriage being a civil contract in the Roman world, the state had full right to regulate the stability and the terms of the compact. In other respects, in which the jurisprudence assumed a higher tone, Christianity, I should conceive, was far more influential through its religious persuasiveness, than by the rigor which it thus im-

Against
pæderasty.

pressed upon the laws of the empire. That nameless crime, the universal disgrace of Greek and Roman society, was far more effectively repressed by the abhorrence infused into the public sentiment by the pure religion of the Gospel, than by the penalty of death, enacted by statute against the offence. Another law of unquestionable humanity,

Making of
eunuchs.

and probably of more extensive operation, prohibited the making of eunuchs. The slave who had suffered this mutilation might at once claim his freedom.¹

Perhaps the greatest evidence of the secret aggression of Christianity, or rather, in my opinion, of the foreign Asiatic principle which was

Laws favor-
able to
celibacy.

¹ All these laws will be found in the Theodosian Code, under the name of Constantine, at the commencement of each book.

now completely interwoven with Christianity, was the gradual relaxation of the laws unfavorable to celibacy. The Roman jurisprudence had always proceeded on the principle of encouraging the multiplication of citizens, particularly in the higher orders, which, from various causes, especially the general licentiousness under the later republic and the early empire, were in danger of becoming extinct. The parent of many children was a public benefactor, the unmarried man a useless burden, if not a traitor, to the well-being of the state. The small establishment of the vestal virgins was evidently the remains of an older religion, inconsistent with the general sentiment and manners of Rome.

On this point the encroachment of Christianity was slow and difficult. The only public indication of its influence was the relaxation of the Papia Poppæan law. This statute enforced certain disabilities on those who were unmarried, or without children by their marriage, at the age of twenty-five. The former could only inherit from their nearest relations; the latter obtained only the tenth of any inheritance which might devolve on their wives, the moiety of property devised to them by will. The forfeiture went to the public treasury, and was a considerable source of profit. Constantine attempted to harmonize the two conflicting principles. He removed the disqualifications on celibacy, but he left the statute in force against married persons who were without children. In more manifest deference to Christianity, he extended the privilege hitherto confined to the vestal virgins of making their will, and that before the usual age appointed by the law, to all who had made a religious vow of celibacy.

Even after his death, both religions vied, as it were, for Constantine. He received with impartial favor the honors of both. The first Christian emperor was deified by the Pagans, in a later period he was worshipped as a saint by part of the Christian Church. On the same medal appears his title of "God," with the monogram, the sacred symbol of Christianity; in another he is seated in the chariot of the Sun, in a car drawn by four horses, with a hand stretched forth from the clouds to raise him to heaven.¹ But to show respect at once to the emperor and to the Christian apostle, contrary to the rigid usage, which forbade any burial to take place within the city, Constantine was interred in the porch of the church dedicated to the apostles. Constantius did great honor (in Chrysostom's opinion) to his imperial father, by burying him in the Fisherman's Porch.²

During the reign of Constantine, Christianity continued to advance beyond the borders of the Roman empire, and, in some degree, to indemnify herself for the losses which she sustained in the kingdom of Persia. The Ethiopians appear to have attained some degree of civilization; a considerable part of the Arabian commerce was kept up with the other side of the Red Sea, through the port of Adulis; and Greek letters appear, from inscriptions recently discovered,³ to have made considerable prog-

¹ *Inter Divos meruit referri*; Eutrop. x. 8; Eckhel. doct. numm. viii. 92, 93; Bolland, 21st Maij. Compare Le Beau, Hist. du Bas Empire, i. p. 388. Beugnot, i. 109.

There exists a calendar in which the festivals of the new God are indicated. — Acad. des Inscript. xv. 106.

² Chrysost., Hom. 60, in 2 Cor.

³ That published by Mr. Salt, from the ruins of Axum, had already appeared in the work of Cosmas Indicopleustes, edited by Montfaucon; Nie-

ress among this barbarous people. The Romans called this country, with that of the Homerites on the other side of the Arabian Gulf, by the vague name of the nearer India. Travellers were by no means uncommon in these times, whether for purposes of trade, or, following the traditional history of the ancient sages, from the more disinterested desire of knowledge. Metrodorus, a philosopher, had extended his travels throughout this region,¹ and, on his return, the account of his adventures induced another person of the same class, Meropius of Tyre, to visit the same regions. Meropius was accompanied by two youths, — Edesius and Frumentius. Meropius, with most of his followers, fell in a massacre, arising out of some sudden interruption of the peace between the Ethiopians and the Romans. Edesius and Frumentius were

buhr published another, discovered by Gau, in Nubia, relating to Silco, king of that country.

¹ The same Metrodorus afterwards made a journey into further India: his object was to visit the Brahmins, to examine their religious tenets and practices. Metrodorus instructed the Indians in the construction of water-mills and baths. In their gratitude, they opened to him the inmost sanctuary of their temples. But the virtue of the philosopher Metrodorus was not proof against the gorgeous treasures which dazzled his eyes: he stole a great quantity of pearls, and other jewels; others, he said that he had received as a present to Constantine from the King of India. He appeared in Constantinople. The emperor received, with the highest satisfaction, those magnificent gifts which Metrodorus presented in his own name. But Metrodorus complained that his offerings would have been far more sumptuous if he had not been attacked on his way through Persia, contrary to the spirit of the existing peace between the empires, and plundered of great part of his treasures. Constantine, it is said, wrote an indignant remonstrance to the King of Persia. This story is curious, as it shows the connection kept up by traders and travellers with the further East, which accounts for the allusions to Indian tenets and usages in the Christian, as well as the Pagan, writers of the time. It rests on the late authority of Cedrenus (t. i. p. 295), but is confirmed by a passage of Ammianus Marcellinus, who, however, places it in the reign of Constantius. "*Sed Constantium ardores Parthicos succendisse, cum Metrodori mendaciis avidius acquiescit.*" — lxxv. c. 4. Compare St. Martin's additions to Le Beau, i. 343.

spared on account of their youth. They were taken into the service of the king, and gradually rose, till one became the royal cup-bearer; the other, the administrator of the royal finances. The king died soon after they had been elevated to these high distinctions, and bequeathed their liberty to the strangers. The queen entreated them to continue their valuable services till her son should attain to full age. The Romans complied with her request, and the supreme government of the kingdom of Ethiopia was administered by these two Romans; but the chief post was occupied by Frumentius. Of the causes which disposed the mind of Frumentius towards Christianity we know nothing: he is represented as seized with an eager desire of becoming acquainted with its tenets, and anxiously inquiring whether any Christians existed in the country, or could be found among the Roman travellers who visited it.¹ It is more probable, since there were so many Jews, both on the Arabian and the African side of the gulf, that some earlier knowledge of Christianity had spread into these regions. But it was embraced with ardor by Frumentius; he built a church, and converted many of the people. When the young king came of age, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the prince and his mother, Frumentius and his companion returned to their native country. Frumentius passed through Alexandria; and, having communicated to Athanasius the happy beginnings of the Gospel in that wild region, the influence of that commanding prelate induced him to accept the mission of the Apostle of

¹ Sozomen, in his ignorance, has recourse to visions, or direct divine inspiration. *Θείας ἰσως προτραπείς ἐπιφανείας, ἥ καὶ αὐτομάτως τοῦ Θεοῦ κινουντος.*

India: He was consecrated Bishop of Axum by the Alexandrian prelate, and that see was always considered to owe allegiance to the patriarchate of Alexandria. The preaching of Frumentius was said to have been eminently successful, not merely among the Ethiopians, but also among the neighboring tribes of Nubians and Blemmyes. His name is still revered as the first of the Ethiopian pontiffs. But probably in no country did Christianity so soon degenerate into a mere form of doctrine; the wild inhabitants of these regions sank downward rather than ascended in the scale of civilization; and the fruits of Christianity, humanity, and knowledge were stifled amid the conflicts of savage tribes, by ferocious manners, and less frequent intercourse with more cultivated nations.¹

The conversion of the Iberians² was the work of a holy virgin. Nino was among the Armenian maidens who fled from the persecutions of Of the Iberians the Persians, and found refuge among the warlike nation of Iberia, the modern Georgia. Her seclusion, her fasting, and constant prayers excited the wonder of these fierce warriors. Two cures which she is said to have wrought, one on the wife of the king, still further directed the attention of the people to the marvellous stranger. The grateful queen became a convert to Christianity. Mihran, the king, still wavered between the awe of his ancient deities, the fear of his subjects, and his inclination to the new and wonder-working faith. One day, when he was hunting in a thick and intricate wood, he was enveloped in a sudden and impenetrable mist. Alone, separated

¹ Compare Stanley, *Eastern Church*, 12, 14, and in other passages.

² Socrates, i. 20; Sozomen, ii. c. 7; Rufin. x. 10; Theodoret, i. 24; Moses Choren, Lib. ii. c. 83; Klaproth, *Travels in Georgia*.

from his companions, his awe-struck mind thought of the Christians' God: he determined to embrace the Christian faith. On a sudden, the mist cleared off, the light shone gloriously down, and in this natural image the king beheld the confirmation of the light of truth spread abroad within his soul. After much opposition, the temple of the great god Aramazd (the Ormuzd of the Persian system) was levelled with the earth. A cross was erected upon its ruins by the triumphant Nino, which was long worshipped as the palladium of the kingdom.¹ Wonders attended on the construction of the first Christian church. An obstinate pillar refused to rise, and defied the utmost mechanical skill of the people to force it from its oblique and pendant position. The holy virgin passed the night in prayer. On the morning, the pillar rose majestically of its own accord, and stood upright upon its pedestal. The wondering people burst into acclamations of praise to the Christians' God, and generally embraced the faith. The King of Iberia entered into an alliance with Constantine, who sent him valuable presents, and a Christian bishop, Eustathius: it is said, the deposed patriarch of Antioch undertook this mission by the command of the emperor; and Iberia was thus secured to the Christian faith.

¹ In 1801, this cross, or that which perpetual tradition accounted as the identical cross, was removed to Petersburg by Prince Bagration. It was restored, to the great joy of the nation, by order of the emperor Alexander.

CHAPTER V.

Christianity under the Sons of Constantine.

IF Christianity was making such rapid progress in the conquest of the world, the world was making fearful reprisals on Christianity. By enlist-^{Accession of the sons of Constantine.} ing new passions and interests in its cause, religion surrendered itself to an inseparable fellowship with those passions and interests. The more it mingles with the tide of human affairs, the more turbid becomes the stream of Christian history. In the intoxication of power, the Christian, like ordinary men, forgot his original character ; and the religion of Jesus, instead of diffusing peace and happiness through society, might, to the superficial observer of human affairs, seem introduced only as a new element of discord and misery into the society of man.

The Christian emperor dies ; he is succeeded by his sons, educated in the faith of the Gospel. The first act of the new reign is the murder of one of the brothers, and of the nephews of the deceased sovereign, who were guilty of being named in the will of Constantine as joint heirs to the empire. This act, indeed, was that of a ferocious soldiery, though the memory of Constantius is not free from the suspicion, at least of connivance in these bloody deeds. Christianity appears only in a favorable light as interposing between the assassins and their victim. Marcus, Bishop of Arethusa, saved Julian from his enemies :

the future apostate was concealed under the altar of the church. Yet, on the accession of the sons of Constantine, to the causes of fraternal animosity usual on the division of a kingdom between several brothers was added that of religious hostility. The Religious differences of the two surviving sons. two emperors (for they were speedily reduced to two) placed themselves at the head of the two contending parties in Christianity. The weak and voluptuous Constans adhered with inflexible firmness to the cause of Athanasius; the no less weak and tyrannical Constantius, to that of Arianism. The East was arrayed against the West. At Rome, at Alexandria, at Sardica, and, afterwards, at Arles and Milan, Athanasius was triumphantly acquitted: at Antioch, at Philippopolis, and finally at Rimini, he was condemned with almost equal unanimity. Even within the Church itself, the distribution of the superior dignities became an object of fatal ambition and strife. The streets of Alexandria and of Constantinople were deluged with blood by the partisans of rival bishops. In the latter, an officer of high distinction, sent by the emperor to quell the tumult, was slain, and his body treated with the utmost indignity by the infuriated populace.

To dissemble or to disguise these melancholy facts is alike inconsistent with Christian truth and wisdom. In some degree, they are accounted for by the proverbial reproach against history, that it is the record of human folly and crime; and history, when the world became impregnated with Christianity, did not at once assume a higher office. In fact, it extends its view only over the surface of society, below which, in general, lie human virtue and happiness. This would be especially the case with regard to Christianity,

whether it withdrew from the sight of man, according to the monastic interpretation of its precepts, into solitary communion with the Deity; or, in its more genuine spirit, was content with exercising its humanizing influence in the more remote and obscure quarters of the general social system.

Even the annals of the Church take little notice of those cities where the Christian episcopate passed calmly down through a succession of pious and beneficent prelates, who lived and died in the undisturbed attachment and veneration of their Christian disciples, and respected by the hostile Pagans; men whose noiseless course of beneficence was constantly diminishing the mass of human misery, and improving the social, the moral, as well as the religious, condition of mankind. But an election contested with violence, or a feud which divided a city into hostile parties, arrested the general attention, and was perpetuated in the records, at first of the Church, afterwards of the empire.

But, in fact, the theological opinions of Christianity naturally made more rapid progress than its moral influence. The former had only to overpower the resistance of a religion which Moral more slow than religious revolution. had already lost its hold upon the mind, or a philosophy too speculative for ordinary understandings and too unsatisfactory for the more curious and inquiring; they had only to enter, as it were, into a vacant place in the mind of man. But the moral influence had to contest, not only with the natural dispositions of man, but with the barbarism and depraved manners of ages. While, then, the religion of the world underwent a total change; while the Church rose on the ruins of the temple, and the pontifical establishment of Paganism became gradually extinct, or suffered violent

suppression,—the moral revolution was far more slow and far less complete. With a large portion of mankind, it must be admitted that the religion itself was Paganism under another form and with different appellations; with another part, it was the religion passively received without any change in the moral sentiments or habits; with a third, and, perhaps, the more considerable part, there was a transfer of the passions and the intellectual activity to a new cause.¹ They were completely identified with Christianity, and to a certain degree actuated by its principles, but they did not apprehend the beautiful harmony which subsists between its doctrines and its moral perfection. Its dogmatic purity was the sole engrossing subject; the unity of doctrine superseded and obscured all other considerations, even of that sublimer unity of principles and effects, of the loftiest views of the divine nature with the purest conceptions of human virtue. Faith not only overpowered, but discarded from her fellowship, Love and Peace. Everywhere there was exaggeration of one of the constituent elements of Christianity,—that exaggeration which is the inevitable consequence of a strong impulse upon the human mind. Wherever men feel strongly, they act violently. The more speculative Christians, therefore, who were more inclined, in the deep and somewhat selfish solicitude for their own salvation, to isolate themselves from the infected mass of mankind, pressed into the extreme of asceticism: the more practical, who were earnest in the desire of dissemi-

¹ "If," said the dying Bishop of Constantinople, "you would have for my successor a man who would edify you by the example of his life, and improve you by the purity of his precepts, choose Paul; if a man versed in the affairs of the world, and able to maintain the interests of the religion, your suffrage must be given to Macedonius."—Soer. E. C. ii. 6.

nating the blessings of religion throughout society, scrupled little to press into their service whatever might advance their cause. With both extremes, the dogmatical part of the religion predominated. The monkish believer imposed the same severity upon the aberrations of the mind as upon the appetites of the body; and, in general, those who are severe to themselves, are both disposed, and think themselves entitled, to enforce the same severity on others. The other, as his sphere became more extensive, was satisfied with an adhesion to the Christian creed, instead of that total change of life demanded of the early Christian, and watched over with such jealous vigilance by the mutual superintendence of a small society. The creed, thus become the sole test, was enforced with all the passion of intense zeal, and guarded with the most subtle and scrupulous jealousy. In proportion to the admitted importance of the creed, men became more sternly and exclusively wedded to their opinions. Thus an antagonistic principle of exclusiveness co-existed with the most comprehensive ambition. While they swept in converts indiscriminately from the palace and the public street, while the emperor and the lowest of the populace were alike admitted on little more than the open profession of allegiance, they were satisfied if the allegiance in this respect was blind and complete. Hence a far larger admixture of human passions and of the common vulgar incentives of action was infused into the expanding Christian body. Men became Christians, orthodox Christians, with little sacrifice of that which Christianity aimed chiefly to extirpate. Yet, after all, this imperfect view of Christianity had probably some effect in concentrating the Christian community, and

holding it together by a new and more indissoluble bond. The world divided into two parties. Though the shades of Arianism—perhaps, if strictly decomposed, of Trinitarianism—were countless as the varying powers of conception or expression in man, yet they were soon consolidated into two compact masses. The Semi-Arians, who approximated so closely to the Nicene creed, were forced back into the main body. Their fine distinctions were not seized by their adversaries, or by the general understanding of the Christians. The bold and decisive definitiveness of the Athanasian doctrine admitted less discretion: and no doubt, though political vicissitudes had some influence on the final establishment of their doctrines, the more illiterate and less imaginative West was predisposed to the Athanasian opinions by its natural repugnance to the more vague and dubious theory. All, however, were enrolled under one or the other standard; and the party which triumphed, eventually would rule the whole Christian world.

Even the feuds of Christianity at this period, though with the few more dispassionate and reasoning of the Pagans they might retard its progress, in some respects contributed to its advancement: they assisted in breaking up that torpid stagnation which brooded over the general mind. It gave a new object of excitement to the popular feeling. The ferocious and ignorant populace of the large cities, which found a new aliment in Christian faction for their mutinous and sanguinary outbursts of turbulence, had almost been better left to sleep on in the passive and undestructive quiet of Pagan indifference. They were dangerous allies; more than dangerous,—fatal to the purity of the Gospel.

Athanasius stands out as the prominent character of the period in the history, not merely of Athanasius. Christianity, but of the world. That history is one long controversy; the life of Athanasius, one unwearied and incessant strife.¹ It is neither the serene course of a being elevated by his religion above the cares and tumults of ordinary life, nor the restless activity of one perpetually employed in a conflict with the ignorance, vice, and misery of an unconverted people. Yet even now (so completely has this polemic spirit become incorporated with Christianity) the memory of Athanasius is regarded by many wise and good men with reverence, which, in Catholic countries, is actual adoration; in Protestant, approaches towards it.² It is impossible, indeed, not to admire the force of intellect which he centred on this minute point of theology, his intrepidity, his constancy; but had he not the power to allay the feud which his inexorable spirit tended to keep alive? Was the term "consubstantialism" absolutely essential to Christianity? If a somewhat wider creed had been accepted, would not the truth at least as soon and as generally have prevailed? Could not the commanding or persuasive voice of Christianity have awed or charmed the troubled waters to peace?

But Athanasius, in exile, would consent to no peace which did not prostrate his antagonists before his feet. He had obtained complete command over the

¹ Life of Athanasius prefixed to his Works. Tillemont, Vie d'Athanasie.

² Compare Möhler, Athanasius der Grosse und seine Zeit (Maintz, 1827), and Newman's Arians. The former is the work of a very powerful Roman Catholic writer, laboring to show that all the vital principles of Christianity were involved in this controversy; and stating *one side* of the question with consummate ability. It is the panegyric of a dutiful son on him whom he calls the father of church theology. — p. 304.

minds of the Western emperors. The demand for his restoration to his see was not an appeal to the justice or to the fraternal affection of Constantius: it was a question of peace or war. Constantius submitted; he received the prelate, on his return, with courtesy, or rather with favor and distinction. Athanasius now

A.D. 338.
Restoration
of Athanasius
to Alexandria.
A.D. 340.

entered Alexandria at the head of a triumphal procession; the bishops of his party resumed their sees; all Egypt returned to its obedience; but the more inflexible Syria still waged the war with unallayed activity. A council was held at Tyre, in which new charges were framed against the Alexandrian prelate: the usurpation of his see in defiance of his condemnation by a council (the imperial power seems to have been treated with no great respect,—for a prelate, it was asserted, deposed by a council, could only be restored by the same authority); violence and bloodshed during his re-occupation of the see; and malversation of sums of money intended for the poor, but appropriated to his own use. A rival council at Alexandria at once acquitted Athanasius on all these points; asserted his right to the see; appealed to and avouched the universal rejoicings at his restoration, and his rigid administration of the funds intrusted to his care.¹

A more august assembly of Christian prelates met in the presence of the emperor at Antioch. Ninety bishops celebrated the consecration of a splendid edifice, called the Church of Gold. The council then entered on the affairs of the Church. A creed was framed satisfactory to all, except that it seemed carefully to exclude the term “consubstan-

A.D. 341.
Council at
Antioch.

¹ Compare throughout the ecclesiastical historians, Theodoret, Socrates, and Sozomen.

tial," or Homoousian. The council ratified the decrees of that of Tyre, with regard to Athanasius. It is asserted, on his part, that the majority had withdrawn to their dioceses before the introduction of this question, and that a factious minority of forty prelates assumed and abused the authority of the council. They proceeded to nominate a new Bishop of Alexandria. Pistus, who had before been appointed to the see, was passed over in silence, probably as too inactive or unambitious for their purpose. Gregory, a native of the wilder region of Cappadocia, but educated under Athanasius himself in the more polished schools of Alexandria, was invested with this important dignity. Alexandria, peacefully reposing, it is said, under the parental episcopate of Athanasius, was suddenly startled by the appearance of an edict, signed by the imperial prefect, announcing the degradation of Athanasius, and the appointment of Gregory. Scenes of savage conflict ensued; the churches were taken as it were by storm; the priests of the Athanasian party were treated with the utmost indignity; virgins scourged; every atrocity perpetrated by unbridled multitudes, embittered by every shade of religious faction. The Alexandrian populace were always ripe for tumult and bloodshed. The Pagans and the Jews mingled in the fray, and seized the opportunity, no doubt, of showing their impartial animosity to both parties; though the Arians (and as the original causes of the tumult, not without justice) were loaded with the unpopularity of this odious alliance. They arrayed themselves on the side of the soldiery appointed to execute the decree of the prefect; and the Arian bishop is charged, not with much probability, with abandoning the churches to their pillage.

Athanasius fled; a second time an exile, he took refuge in the West. He appeared again at Rome, in the dominions and under the protection of Athanasius flies to Rome. an orthodox emperor; for Constans, who, after the death of Constantine, the first protector of Athanasius, had obtained the larger part of the empire belonging to his murdered brother, was no less decided in his support of the Nicene opinions. The two great Western prelates, Hosius of Cordova, eminent from his age and character, and Julius, Bishop of Rome, from the dignity of his see, openly espoused his cause. Wherever Athanasius resided,—at Alexandria, in Gaul, in Rome,—in general the devoted clergy, and even the people, adhered with unshaken fidelity to his tenets. Such was the commanding dignity of his character, such his power of profoundly stamping his opinions on the public mind.

The Arian party, independent of their speculative opinions, cannot be absolved from the unchristian heresy of cruelty and revenge. However darkly colored, we cannot reject the general testimony to their acts of violence, wherever they attempted to regain their authority. Usurpation of Gregory. Gregory is said to have attempted to compel bishops, priests, monks, and holy virgins, to Christian communion with a prelate thus forced upon them, by every kind of insult and outrage; by scourging and beating with clubs: those were fortunate who escaped with exile.¹ But, if Alexandria was disturbed by the hostile excesses of the Arians, in Constantinople itself the conflicting religious parties gave rise to the first of those popular tumults which so frequently, in later times, distracted

¹ Athanas. Oper. p. 112, 149, 350, 352, and the ecclesiastical historians, *in loc.*

and disgraced the city. Eusebius, formerly Bishop of Nicomedia, the main support of the Arian party had risen to the episcopacy of the imperial city. His enemies reproached the worldly ambition which deserted an humbler for a more eminent see; but they were not less inclined to contest this important post with the utmost activity. At his death, the Athanasian party revived the claims of Paul, whom they asserted to have been canonically elected and unjustly deposed from the see; the Arians supported Macedonius. The dispute spread from the church into the streets, from the clergy to the populace; blood was shed; the whole city was in arms on one part or the other.

A.D. 338.

Bloody
quarrel at
Constantinople.
A.D. 342.

The emperor was at Antioch; he commanded Hermogenes, who was appointed to the command of the cavalry in Thrace, to pass through Constantinople, and expel the intruder Paul. Hermogenes, at the head of his soldiery, advanced to force Paul from the church. The populace rose; the soldiers were repelled; the general took refuge in a house, which was instantly set on fire; the mangled body of Hermogenes was dragged through the streets, and at length cast into the sea. Constantius heard this extraordinary intelligence at Antioch. The contempt of the imperial mandate, the murder of an imperial officer in the contested nomination of a bishop, were as yet so new in the annals of the world, as to fill him with equal astonishment and indignation. He mounted his horse, though it was winter and the mountain-passes were dangerous and difficult with snow; he hastened with the utmost speed to Constantinople. But the deep humiliation of the senate and the heads of the people, who prostrated themselves at his feet, averted his re-

sentment: the people were punished by a diminution of the usual largess of corn. Paul was expelled; but, as though some blame adhered to both the conflicting parties, the election of Macedonius was not confirmed, although he was allowed to exercise the episcopal functions. Paul retired, first to Thessalonica, subsequently to the court of Constans.

The remoter consequences of the Athanasian controversy began to develop themselves at this early period. The Christianity of the East and the West gradually assumed a divergent and independent character. Though, during a short time, the Arianism of the Ostrogothic conquerors gave a temporary predominance in Italy to that creed, the West in general submitted, in uninquiring acquiescence, to the Trinitarianism of Athanasius. In the East, on the other hand, though the doctrines of Athanasius eventually obtained the superiority, the controversy gave birth to a long and unexhausted line of subordinate disputes. The East retained its mingled character of Oriental speculativeness and Greek subtlety. It could not abstain from investigating and analyzing the divine nature, and the relations of Christ and the Holy Ghost to the Supreme Being. Macedonianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, with the fatal disputes relating to the procession of the Holy Ghost during almost the last hours of the Byzantine empire, may be considered the lineal descendants of this prolific controversy. The opposition between the East and West of itself tended to increase the authority of that prelate, who assumed his acknowledged station as the head and representative of the Western churches. The commanding and popular part taken by the Bishop of Rome, in favor of Atha-

Effects of the
Trinitarian
controversy
in the West.

nasius and his doctrines, enabled him to stand forth in undisputed superiority, as at once the chief of the Western episcopate and the champion of orthodoxy. The age of Hosius, and his residence in a remote province, withdrew the only competitor for this superiority. Athanasius took up his residence at Rome, and, under the protection of the Roman prelate, defied his adversaries to a new contest. Julius summoned the accusers of Athanasius to plead the cause before a council in Rome.¹ The Eastern prelates altogether disclaimed his jurisdiction, and rejected his pretensions to rejudge the cause of a bishop already condemned by the council of Tyre. The answer of Julius is directed rather to the justification of Athanasius than to the assertion of his own authority. The synod of Rome solemnly acquitted Athanasius, Paul, and all their adherents. The Western emperor joined in the sentiments of his clergy. A second council at Milan, in the presence of Constans, confirmed the decree of Rome. Constans proposed to his brother to convoke a general council of both empires. A neutral or border ground was chosen for this decisive conflict. At Sardica met one hundred prelates from the West, from the East only seventy-five.² Notwithstanding his age and

Athanasius
at Rome.

Julius,
Bishop of
Rome.

Synod at
Rome.

A.D. 343.
At Milan.

Council of
Sardica.
A.D. 345-6.

¹ Julius is far from asserting any individual authority, or pontifical supremacy. "Why do you alone write?"—"Because I represent the *opinions* of the bishops of Italy."—Epist. Julian., Athanas. Op. l. 146.

The ecclesiastical historians, however, in the next century, assert that Rome claimed a right of adjudication. Γνωρίζουσιν οὖν τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ Ῥώμης Ἰουλίῳ τὰ καθ' ἑαυτούς· ὁ δὲ ἅτε προνόμεια τῆς ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἐκκλησίας ἐχούσης.—Soz., E. H. ii. 15. Οἱα δὲ τῶν πάντων κηδεμονίας αὐτῷ προσηκοούσης διὰ τὴν ἀξίαν τοῦ θρόνου.—Soz., E. H. iii. 8.

² By some accounts there were one hundred Western bishops, seventy-three Eastern.

infirmities, Hosius travelled from the extremity of the empire: he at once took the lead in the assembly; and it is remarkable, that the Bishop of Rome, so zealous in the cause of Athanasius, alleged an excuse for his absence, which may warrant the suspicion that he was unwilling to be obscured in this important scene by the superior authority of Hosius. Five of the Western prelates, among whom were Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa, embraced the Arian cause: the Arians complained of the defection of two bishops from their body, who betrayed their secret counsels to their adversaries.¹ In all these councils, it appears not to have occurred, that, religion being a matter of faith, the suffrages of the majority could not possibly impose a creed upon a conscientious minority. The question had been too often agitated to expect that it could be placed in a new light.

On matters of fact, the suffrages of the more numerous party might have weight, in the personal condemnation, for instance, or the acquittal of Athanasius; but, as these suffrages could not convince the understanding of those who voted on the other side, the theological decisions must of necessity be rejected, unless the minority would submit likewise to the humiliating confession of insincerity, ignorance, or precipitancy in judgment.² The Arian minority did not await this issue; having vainly attempted to impede the progress of the council, by refusing to sanction the presence of persons excommunicated, they seceded to Philippopolis in Thrace. In these two cities sat the rival councils, each asserting itself

Rival council
at Philip-
popolis.

¹ Concilia Labbe, vol. iii. Athanas. contr. Arian, &c.

² The Oriental bishops protested against the assumption of supremacy by the Western. "Novam legem introducere putaverunt, ut Orientales Episcopi ab Occidentalibus judicarentur."—Apud Hilar. Fragm. iii.

the genuine representative of Christendom, issuing decrees, and anathematizing their adversaries. The Arians are accused of maintaining their influence, even in the East, by acts of great cruelty. In Adrianople, in Alexandria, they enforced submission to their tenets by the scourge, and by heavy penalties.¹

The Western council at Milan accepted and ratified the decrees of the council of Sardica, absolving Athanasius of all criminality, and receiving his doctrines as the genuine and exclusive truths of the Gospel. On a sudden, affairs took a new turn: Constantius threw himself, as it were, at the feet of Athanasius, and in three successive letters entreated him to resume his episcopal throne. The emperor and the prelate (who had delayed at first to obey, either from fear or from pride, the flattering invitation) met at Antioch with mutual expressions of respect and cordiality.² Constantius ordered all the accusations against Athanasius to be erased from the registers of the city. He commended the prelate to the people of Alexandria in terms of courtly flattery, which harshly contrast with his former, as well as with his subsequent, conduct to Athanasius. The Arian bishop, Gregory, was dead; and Athanasius, amid the universal joy, re-entered the city. The bishops crowded from all parts to salute and congratulate the prelate who had thus triumphed over the malice of even imperial enemies. Incense curled up in all the streets; the city was brilliantly illuminated. It was an ovation

Reconciliation of Constantius with Athanasius. A.D. 349.

¹ The cause of Marcellus of Ancyra, whom the Eusebian party accused of Sabellianism, was throughout connected with that of Athanasius.

² The emperor proposed to Athanasius to leave one church to the Arians at Alexandria; Athanasius dexterously eluded the request, by very fairly demanding that one church in Antioch, where the Arians predominated, should be set apart for those of his communion.

by the admirers of Athanasius ; it is said to have been a Christian ovation ; alms were lavished on the poor ; every house resounded with prayer and thanksgiving as if it were a church ; the triumph of Athanasius was completed by the recantation of Ursacius and Valens, two of his most powerful antagonists.¹

This sudden change in the policy of Constantius is scarcely explicable upon the alleged motives.

A.D. 349.

It is ascribed to the detection of an infamous conspiracy against one of the Western bishops, deputed on a mission to Constantius. The aged prelate was charged with incontinence, but the accusation recoiled on its inventors. A man of infamous character, Onager the wild ass, the chief conductor of the plot, on being detected, avowed himself the agent of Stephen, the Arian Bishop of Antioch. Stephen was ignominiously deposed from his see. Yet this single fact would scarcely have at once estranged the mind of Constantius from the interests of the Arian party ; his subsequent conduct when, as emperor of the whole world, he could again dare to display his deep-rooted hostility to Athanasius, induces the suspicion of political reasons. Constantius was about to be embarrassed

Persian war.

with the Persian war ; at this dangerous crisis, the admonitions of his brother, not unmingled with warlike menace, might enforce the expediency at least of a temporary reconciliation with Athanasius. After that reconciliation and the triumph of Athanasius, the political troubles of three years suspended the religious strife. The war of Persia brought some fame to the arms of Constantius ;

Death of
Constans.

and in the more honorable character, not of the antagonist, but the avenger of his

¹ Greg. Nazian. Enc. Athanas. Athanas., Hist. Arian.

murdered brother, the surviving son of Constantine again united the East and West under his sole dominion. Magnentius, who had usurped the Western empire and mounted the throne over the bloody corpse of the murdered Constans, fell before the avenging arm of Constantius.

The battle of Mursa, if we are to credit a writer somewhat more recent, was no less fatal to the interests of Athanasius than to the arms of Magnentius.¹ Ursacius and Valens, after their recantation, had relapsed to Arianism. Valens was the Bishop of Mursa, and in the immediate neighborhood of that town was fought the decisive battle. Constantius retired with Valens into the principal church, to assist with his prayers, rather than with his directions or personal prowess, the success of his army. The agony of his mind may be conceived, during the long suspense of a conflict on which the sovereignty of the world depended, and in which the conquerors lost more men than the vanquished.² Valens stood or knelt by his side: on a sudden, when the emperor was wrought to the highest state of agitation, Valens proclaimed the tidings of his complete victory; intelligence communicated to the prelate by an angel from heaven. Whether Valens had anticipated the event by a bold fiction, or arranged some plan for obtaining rapid information, he appeared from that time to the emperor as a man especially favored by Heaven, a prophet, and one of good omen. With Valens, Arianism re-assumed its authority over the vacillating mind of Constantius.

But either the fears of the emperor or the caution

¹ Sulpicius Severus, ii. c. 54.

² Magnentius is said by Zonaras to have sacrificed a girl to propitiate the gods on this momentous occasion. — lib. xiii. t. ii. p. 16, 17.

of the Arian party delayed yet for three or four years to execute their revenge on Athanasius. They began with a less illustrious victim. Philip, the a.d. 351
so 355. prefect of the East, received instructions to expel Paul, and to replace Macedonius on the episcopal throne of Constantinople. Philip remembered the fate of Hermogenes; he secured himself in the thermæ of Zeuxippus, and summoned the prelate to his presence. He then communicated his instructions, and frightened or persuaded the aged Paul to consent to be secretly transported in a boat over the Bosphorus. In the morning, Philip appeared in his car, with Macedonius by his side in the pontifical attire; he drove directly to the church, but the soldiers were obliged to hew their way through the dense and resisting crowd to the altar. Macedonius passed over the murdered bodies (three thousand are said to have fallen) to the throne of the Christian prelate. Paul was carried in chains first to Emesa, afterwards to a wild town in the deserts about Mount Taurus. He had disappeared from the sight of his followers, and it is certain that he died in those remote regions. The Arians gave out that he died a natural death. It was the general belief of the Athanasians that his death was hastened, and even that he had been strangled by the hands of the prefect Philip.¹

But, before the decisive blow was struck against Athanasius, Constantius endeavored to subdue the West to the Arian opinions. The emperor, released from the dangers of war, occupied his triumphant leisure in Christian controversy. He seemed determined to establish his sole dominion over the religion as well

¹ Athanas. Oper. i. 322, 348. Socrat., E. H. ii. 26.

as the civil obedience of his subjects. The Western bishops firmly opposed the conqueror of Mag-
 nentius. At the councils, first of Arles and
 afterwards of Milan, they refused to sub-
 scribe the condemnation of Athanasius, or to commu-
 nicate with the Arians. Liberius, the new
 Bishop of Rome, refused the timid and disin-
 genuous compromise to which his representa-
 tive at Arles, Vincent, Deacon of Rome, had agreed,—
 assent to the condemnation of Athanasius, if, at the
 same time, a decisive anathema should be issued
 against the tenets of Arius. At Milan, the bishops
 boldly asserted the independence of the church upon
 the empire. The Athanasian party forgot, or chose
 not to remember, that they had unanimously applauded
 the interference of Constantine, when, after the Nicene
 council, he drove the Arian bishops into exile. Thus
 it has always been: the sect or party which has the
 civil power in its favor is embarrassed with no doubts
 as to the legality of its interference; when hostile, it
 resists, as an unwarrantable aggression on its own
 freedom, that which it has not scrupled to employ
 against its adversaries.

Councils of
 Arles and
 Milan.
 A.D. 353, 355.

Persecution
 of Liberius,
 Bishop of
 Rome.

The new charges against Athanasius were of very
 different degrees of magnitude and probabil-
 ity. He was accused of exciting the hos-
 tility of Constans against his brother. The fact that
 Constans had threatened to re-instate the exiled pre-
 late by force of arms might give weight to this charge;
 but the subsequent reconciliation, the gracious recep-
 tion of Athanasius by the emperor, the public edicts
 in his favor, had, in all justice, cancelled the guilt, if
 there were really guilt, in this undue influence over
 the mind of Constans. He was accused of treasona-

New charges
 against
 Athanasius.

ble correspondence with the usurper Magnentius Athanasius repelled this charge with natural indignation. He must have been a monster of ingratitude, worthy a thousand deaths, if he had leagued with the murderer of his benefactor, Constans. He defied his enemies to the production of any letters; he demanded the severest investigation, the strictest examination, of his own secretaries or those of Magnentius. The descent is rapid from these serious charges to that of having officiated in a new and splendid church, the Cæsarean, without the permission of the emperor; and the exercising a paramount and almost monarchical authority over the churches along the whole course of the Nile, even beyond his legitimate jurisdiction. The first was strangely construed into an intentional disrespect to the emperor: the latter might fairly be attributed to the zeal of Athanasius for the extension of Christianity. Some of these points might appear beyond the jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical tribunal; and in the council of Milan there seems to have been an inclination to separate the cause of Athanasius from that of his doctrine. As at Arles, some proposed to abandon the person of Athanasius to the will of the emperor, if a general condemnation should be passed against the tenets of Arius.

Three hundred ecclesiastics formed the council of
Council of Milan. Milan. Few of these were from the East. The Bishop of Rome did not appear in person to lead the orthodox party. His chief representative was Lucifer of Cagliari, a man of ability, but of violent temper and unguarded language. The Arian faction was headed by Ursacius and Valens, the old adversaries of Athanasius, and by the emperor himself. Constantius, that the proceedings might take

place more immediately under his own superintendence, adjourned the assembly from the church to the palace. This unseemly intrusion of a layman in the deliberations of the clergy, unfortunately, was not without precedent. Those who had proudly hailed the entrance of Constantine into the synod of Nicæa could not, consistently, deprecate the presence of his son at Milan.

The controversy became a personal question between the emperor and his refractory subject. The emperor descended into the arena, and mingled in all the fury of the conflict. A.D. 355. Constantius was not content with assuming the supreme place as emperor, or interfering in the especial province of the bishops,—the theological question: he laid claim to direct inspiration. He was commissioned by a vision from Heaven to restore peace to the afflicted Church. The scheme of doctrine which he proposed was asserted by the Western bishops to be strongly tainted with Arianism. The prudence of the Athanasian party was not equal to their firmness and courage. The obsequious and almost adoring court of the emperor must have stood aghast at the audacity of the ecclesiastical synod. Their language was that of vehement invective, rather than dignified dissent or calm remonstrance. Constantius, concealed behind a curtain, listened to the debate; he heard his own name coupled with that of heretic, of Antichrist. His indignation now knew no bounds. He proclaimed himself the champion of the Arian doctrines, and the accuser of Athanasius. Yet flatteries, persuasions, bribes, menaces, penalties, exiles, were necessary to extort the assent of the resolute assembly. Then they became conscious of the impropriety of a lay em-

peror's intrusion into the debates of an ecclesiastical synod. They demanded a free council, in which the emperor should neither preside in person nor by his commissary. They lifted up their hands, and entreated the angry Constantius not to mingle up the affairs of the state and the Church.¹ Three prelates, Lucifer of Cagliari, Eusebius of Vercellæ, Dionysius of Milan, were sent into banishment, to places remote from each other, and the most inhospitable regions of the empire. Liberius, the Roman pontiff, rejected with disdain the presents of the emperor; he resisted with equal firmness his persuasions and his acts of violence.

Though his palace in Rome was carefully closed and
Fall of
Liberius. garrisoned by some of his faithful flock, Liberius was seized at length, and carried to Milan. He withstood, somewhat contemptuously, the personal entreaties and arguments of the emperor.² He rejected with disdain the imperial offers of money for his journey, and told the emperor to keep it to pay his army. The same offer was made by Eusebius the eunuch: "Does a sacrilegious robber like thee think to give alms to me, as to a mendicant?" The Bishop of Rome was exiled to Berbea, a city of Thrace. An Arian prelate, Felix, was forced upon the unwilling city.

But two years of exile broke the spirit of Liberius. He began to listen to the advice of the Arian Bishop of Berbea; the solitude, the cold climate, and the discomforts of this uncongenial region, had more effect than the presents or the menaces of the emperor. Pope Liberius signed the Arian formulary of Sirmium;

¹ Μηδὲ ἀναμίσγειν τὴν Ῥωμῆικὴν τῇ τῆς ἐκκλησίας διατάγῃ -- Ἀθανάσιος ad Mon. c. 34, 36. Compare c. 52.

² Theodoret, iv. 16

he assented to the condemnation of Athanasius. The fall of the aged Hosius increased the triumph of the Arians. Some of the Catholic writers reproach with undue bitterness the weakness of an old man, whose nearer approach to the grave, they assert, ought to have confirmed him in his inalienable fidelity to Christ. But even Christianity has no power over that mental imbecility which accompanies the decay of physical strength; and this act of feebleness ought not, for an instant, to be set against the unblemished virtue of a whole life.

Fall of
Hosius.

Constantius, on his visit to Rome, was astonished by an address, presented by some of the principal females of the city in their most splendid attire, to entreat the restoration of Liberius. The emperor offered to re-admit Liberius to a co-ordinate authority with the Arian bishop, Felix. The females rejected with indignant disdain this dishonorable compromise; and, when Constantius commanded a similar proposition to be publicly read in the circus at the time of games, he was answered by a general shout, "One God, one Christ, one bishop."

Reception of
Constantius
at Rome.

Had, then, the Christians, if this story be true, already overcome their aversion to the public games? or are we to suppose that the whole populace of Rome took an interest in the appointment of the Christian pontiff?

Athanasius awaited in tranquil dignity the bursting storm. He had eluded the imperial summons to appear at Milan, upon the plea that it was ambiguous and obscure. Constantius, either from some lingering remorse, from reluctance to have his new condemnatory ordinances confronted with his favorable and almost adulatory testimonies to the

Orders to
remove
Athanasius.

innocence of Athanasius, or from fear lest a religious insurrection in Alexandria and Egypt should embarrass the Government, and cut off the supplies of corn from the Eastern capital, refused to issue any written order for the deposal and expulsion of Athanasius. He chose, apparently, to retain the power, if convenient, of disowning his emissaries. Two secretaries were despatched with a verbal message, commanding the prelate's abdication. Athanasius treated the imperial officers with the utmost courtesy, but respectfully demanded their written instructions. A kind of suspension of hostilities seems to have been agreed upon, till further instructions could be obtained from the emperor. But, in the mean time, Syrianus, the duke of the province, was drawing the troops from all parts of Libya and Egypt to invest and occupy the city. A force of five thousand men was thought necessary to depose a peaceable Christian bishop. The great events in the life of Athanasius, as we have already seen on two occasions, seem, either designedly or of themselves, to take a highly dramatic form. It was midnight; and the archbishop, surrounded by the more devout of his flock, was performing the solemn ceremony, previous to the sacramental service of the next day, in the church of St. Theonas. Suddenly the sound of trumpets, the trampling of steeds, the

Tumult in
the church of
Alexandria. clash of arms, the bursting the bolts of the doors, interrupted the silent devotions of the assembly. The archbishop on his throne, in the depth of the choir, on which fell the dim light of the lamps, beheld the gleaming arms of the soldiery, as they burst into the nave of the church. The archbishop, as the ominous sounds grew louder, commanded the chanting of the 135th (136th) Psalm.

The choristers' voices swelled into the solemn strain,—"Oh! give thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious:" the people took up the burden,—“for his mercy endureth for ever.” The clear, full voices of the congregation rose over the wild tumult, now without, and now within, the church.

A discharge of arrows commenced the conflict; and Athanasius calmly exhorted his people to continue their only defensive measures, their prayers to their Almighty Protector. Syrianus at the same time ordered the soldiers to advance. The cries of the wounded, the groans of those who were trampled down in attempting to force their way out through the soldiery, the shouts of the assailants, mingled in wild and melancholy uproar. But, before the soldiers had reached the end of the sanctuary, the pious disobedience of his clergy and of a body of monks hurried the archbishop by some secret passage out of the tumult. His escape appeared little less than miraculous to his faithful followers. The riches of the altar, the sacred ornaments of the church, and even the consecrated virgins, were abandoned to the license of an exasperated soldiery. The Catholics in vain drew up an address to the emperor, appealing to his justice against this sacrilegious outrage; they suspended the arms of the soldiery, which had been left on the floor of the church, as a reproachful memorial of the violence. Constantius confirmed the acts of his officers.¹

The Arians were prepared to replace the deposed prelate; their choice fell on another Cappa- George of Cappadocia. docian more savage and unprincipled than the former one. Constantius commended George of

¹ Athanas., *Apol. de Fugâ*, vol. i. p. 334; ad Monachos, 373, 378. 393, 395, ad Const. 307, 310. Tillemont, *Vie d'Athanase*.

Cappadocia to the people of Alexandria, as a prelate above praise, the wisest of teachers, the fittest guide to the kingdom of heaven. His adversaries paint him in the blackest colors : the son of a fuller, he had been in turns a parasite, a receiver of taxes, a bankrupt. Ignorant of letters, savage in manners, he was taken up, while leading a vagabond life, by the Arian prelate of Antioch, and made a priest before he was a Christian. He employed the collections gathered for the poor in bribing the eunuchs of the palace. But he possessed, no doubt, great worldly ability ; he was without fear and without remorse. He entered Alexandria environed by the troops of Syrianus. His presence let loose the rabid violence of party ; the Arians exacted ample vengeance for their long period of depression ; houses were plundered ; monasteries burned ; tombs broken open, to search for concealed Athanasians, or for the prelate himself, who still eluded their pursuit ; bishops were insulted ; virgins scourged ; the soldiery encouraged to break up every meeting of the Catholics by violence, and even by inhuman tortures. The duke Sebastian, at the head of three thousand troops, charged a meeting of the Athanasian Christians. No barbarity was too revolting ; they are said to have employed instruments of torture to compel them to Christian unity with the Arians ; females were scourged with the prickly branches of the palm-tree. The Pagans readily transferred their allegiance, so far as allegiance was demanded ; while the savage and ignorant among them rejoiced in the occasion for plunder and cruelty. Others hailed these feuds, and almost anticipated the triumphant restoration of their own religion. Men, they thought, must grow weary and disgusted with a religion productive of so much

crime, bloodshed, and misery. Echoing back the language of the Athanasians, they shouted out, "Long life to the emperor Constantius, and the Arians who have abjured Christianity." And Christianity they seem to have abjured, though not in the sense intended by their adversaries. They had abjured all Christian humanity, holiness, and peace.

The avarice of George was equal to his cruelty. Exactions were necessary to maintain his interest with the eunuchs, to whom he owed his promotion. The prelate of Alexandria forced himself into the secular affairs of the city. He endeavored to secure a monopoly of the nitron produced in the lake Mareotis, of the salt-works, and of the papyrus. He became a manufacturer of those painted coffins which were still in use among the Egyptians. Once he was expelled by a sudden insurrection of the people, who surrounded the church, in which he was officiating, and threatened to tear him in pieces. He took refuge in the court, which was then at Sirmium, and a few months beheld him re-instated by the command of his faithful patron, the emperor.¹ A re-instated tyrant is, in general, the most cruel oppressor; and, unless party violence has blackened the character of George of Cappadocia beyond even its ordinary injustice, the addition of revenge, and the haughty sense of impunity derived from the imperial protection, to the evil passions already developed in his soul, rendered him a still more intolerable scourge to the devoted city.

Everywhere the Athanasian bishops were expelled from their sees; they were driven into banishment. The desert was constantly sounding with the hymns of these pious and venerable exiles, as they passed along,

¹ He was at Sirmium, May, 359; restored in October.

loaded with chains, to the remote and savage place of their destination ; many of them bearing the scars and wounds and mutilations which had been inflicted upon them by their barbarous persecutors, to enforce their compliance with the Arian doctrines.

Athanasius, after many strange adventures, — having been concealed in a dry cistern, and in the chamber of a beautiful woman, who attended him with the most officious devotion (his awful character was not even tinged with the breath of suspicion), — found refuge at length among the monks of

the desert. Egypt is bordered on all sides by wastes of sand, or by barren rocks, broken into caves and intricate passes ; and all these solitudes were now peopled by the fanatic followers of the hermit Antony. They were all devoted to the opinions and attached to the person of Athanasius. The austerities of the prelate extorted their admiration : as he had been the great example of a dignified, active, and zealous bishop, so was he now of an ascetic and mortified solitary. The most inured to self-inflicted tortures of mind and body found themselves equalled, if not outdone, in their fasts and austerities by the lofty Patriarch of Alexandria. Among these devoted adherents, his security was complete ; their passionate reverence admitted not the fear of treachery. The more active and inquisitive the search of his enemies, he had only to plunge deeper into the inaccessible and inscrutable desert. From this solitude Athanasius himself is supposed sometimes to have issued forth, and, passing the seas, to have traversed even parts of the West, animating his followers, and confirming the faith of his whole widely disseminated party. His own

Escape and
retreat of
Athanasius.

A.D. 356.

language implies his personal though secret presence at the councils of Seleucia and Rimini.¹

From the desert, unquestionably, came forth many of those writings which must have astonished the Heathen world by their unprecedented boldness. For the first time since the foundation of the empire, the Government was more or less publicly assailed in addresses, which arraigned its measures as unjust and as transgressing its legitimate authority, and which did not spare the person of the reigning emperor. In the West, as well as in the East, Constantius was assailed with equal freedom of invective.

Hilary of
Poitiers.

The book of Hilary of Poitiers against Constantius is said not to have been made public till after the death of the emperor; but it was most likely circulated among the Catholics of the West; and the author exposed himself to the activity of hostile informers, and the indiscretion of fanatical friends. The emperor, in that book, is declared to be Antichrist, a tyrant, not only in secular, but likewise in religious affairs: the sole object of his reign was to make a free gift to the Devil of the whole world, for which Christ had suffered.² Lucifer of Cagliari, whose violent

¹ Athanas. Oper. vol. i. p. 869. Compare Tillemont, Vie d'Athanase.

² "Nihil prorsus aliud egit, quam ut orbem terrarum, pro quo Christus passus est, diabolo condonaret." — Adv. Constant. c. 15. Hilary's highest indignation is excited by the gentle and insidious manner with which he confesses that Constantius endeavored to compass his unholy end. He would not honor them with the dignity of martyrs; but he used the prevailing persuasion of bribes, flatteries, and honors: "Non dorsa cædit, sed ventrem palpat; non trudit carcere ad libertatem, sed intra palatium honorat ad servitutem; non latera vexat, sed cor occupat . . . non contendit ne vincatur, sed adulatur ut dominetur." There are several other remarkable passages in this tract. Constantius wished to confine the creed to the language of Scripture. This was rejected, as infringing on the authority of the bishops, and the forms of apostolic preaching. "Nolo, inquit, verba quæ non scripta sunt dici. Hoc tandem rogo, quis episcopis jubeat et quis apostolicæ prædicationis vetet formam?" — c. 16. Among the sentences ascribed to the Arians, which so

temper afterwards distracted the Western Church with a schism, is now therefore repudiated by the common consent of all parties. But Athanasius speaks in ardent admiration of the intemperate writings of this passionate man, and once describes him as inflamed by the spirit of God. Lucifer, in his banishment, sent five books full of the most virulent invective to the emperor. Constantius — it was the brighter side of his religious character — received these addresses with almost contemptuous equanimity. He sent a message to Lucifer, to demand if he was the author of these works. Lucifer replied, not merely by an intrepid acknowledgment of his former writings, but by a sixth, in still more unrestrained and exaggerated language. Constantius was satisfied with banishing him to the Thebaid. Athanasius himself, who in his public vindication addressed to Constantius, maintained the highest respect for the imperial dignity, in his Epistle to the Solitaries gives free vent and expression to his vehement and contempt-

much shocked the Western bishops, there is one which is evidently the argument of a strong anti-materialist asserting the sole existence of the Father, and that the terms of son and generation, &c., are not to be received in a literal sense. "*Erat Deus quod est. Pater non erat, quia neque ei filius; nam si filius, necesse est ut et fœmina sit,*" &c. One phrase has a singularly Oriental, I would say Indian, cast. "How much soever the Son expands himself towards the knowledge of the Father, so much the Father super-expands himself, lest he should be known by the Son." "*Quantum enim Filius se extendit cognoscere Patrem, tantum Pater superextendit se, ne cognitus Filio sit.*" — c. 13. The parties, at least in the West, were speaking two totally distinct languages. It would be unjust to Hilary not to acknowledge the beautiful and Christian sentiments scattered through his two former addresses to Constantius, which are firm but respectful; and if rigidly, yet sincerely, dogmatic. His plea for toleration, if not very consistently maintained, is expressed with great force and simplicity. "*Deus cognitionem sui docuit potius quam exegit. . . . Deus universitatis est. Dominus; non requirit coactam confessionem. Nostrâ potius non tuâ causâ venerandus est. . . . simplicitate quærendus est, confessione discendus est, charitate amandus est, timore venerandus est, voluntatis probitate retinendus est.*" — lib. i. c. 6.

uous sentiments. His recluse friends are cautioned, indeed, not to disclose the dangerous document, in which the tyrants of the Old Testament, Pharaoh, Ahab, Belshazzar, are contrasted, to his disadvantage, with the base, the cruel, the hypocritical Constantius. It is curious to observe this new element of freedom, however at present working in a concealed, irregular, and, perhaps, still guarded manner, mingling itself with, and partially up-heaving, the general prostration of the human mind. The Christian, or, in some respects, it might be more justly said, the hierarchical principle, was entering into the constitution of human society, as an antagonistic power to that of the civil sovereign. The Christian community was no longer a separate republic, governed within by its own laws, yet submitting, in all but its religious observances, to the general ordinances. By the establishment of Christianity under Constantine, and the gradual re-union of two sections of mankind into one civil society, those two powers, that of the Church and the state, became co-ordinate authorities, which, if any difference should arise between the heads of the respective supremacies, — if the emperor and the dominant party in Christendom should take opposite sides, led to inevitable collision. This crisis had already arrived. An Arian emperor was virtually excluded from a community in which the Athanasian doctrines prevailed. The son of Constantine belonged to an excommunicated class, to whom the dominant party refused the name of Christians. Thus these two despotisms, both founded on opinion (for obedience to the imperial authority was rooted in the universal sentiment), instead of gently counteracting and mitigating each other, came at once into direct and angry conflict. The emperor

might with justice begin to suspect, that, instead of securing a peaceful and submissive ally, he had raised up a rival or a master; for the son of Constantine was thus, in his turn, disdainfully ejected from the society which his father had incorporated with the empire. It may be doubted how far the violences and barbarities ascribed by the Catholics to their Arian foes may be attributed to the indignation of the civil power at this new and determined resistance. Though Constantius might himself feel or affect a compassionate disdain at these unusual attacks on his person and dignity, the general feeling of the Heathen population, and of many among the local governors, might resist this contumacious contempt of the supreme authority. It is difficult otherwise to account for the general tumults excited by these disputes in Alexandria, in Constantinople, and in Rome, where at least a very considerable part of the population had no concern in the religious quarrel. The old animosity against Christianity would array itself under the banners of one of the conflicting parties, or take up the cause of the insulted sovereignty of the emperor. The Athanasians constantly assert, that the Arians courted, or at least did not decline, the invidious alliance of the Pagans.

But in truth, in the horrible cruelties perpetrated during these unhappy divisions, it was the same savage ferocity of manners, which, half a century before, had raged against the Christian Church, which now apparently raged in its cause.¹

¹ See the depositions of the bishops assembled at Sardica, of the violence which they had themselves endured at the hands of the Arians. "Alii autem gladiatorum signa, plagas et cicatrices estendebant. Alii se a se ipsis excruciatos querebantur. Et hæc non ignobiles testificabantur viri, sed de ecclesiis omnibus electi propter quas huc convenerunt, res gestas edocebant,

The abstruse tenets of the Christian theology became the ill-understood, perhaps unintelligible, watchwords of violent and disorderly men. The rabble of Alexandria and other cities availed themselves of the commotion to give loose to their suppressed passion for the excitement of plunder and bloodshed. How far the doctrines of Christianity had worked down into the populace of the great cities cannot be ascertained, or even conjectured; its spirit had not in the least mitigated their ferocity and inhumanity. If Christianity is accused as the immediate exciting cause of these disastrous scenes, the predisposing principle was in that uncivilized nature of man, which not merely was unallayed by the gentle and humanizing tenets of the Gospel, but, as it has perpetually done, pressed the Gospel itself, as it were, into its own unhallowed service.

The severe exclusiveness of dogmatic theology attained its height in this controversy. Hitherto, the Catholic and heretical doctrines had receded from each other at the first outset, and drawn off to opposite and

milites armatos, populos cum fustibus, iudicum minas, falsarum literarum suppositiones. . . . Ad hæc virginum nudationes, incendia ecclesiarum, carceres adversos ministros Dei." — Hilar., *Fragm. Op. Hist.* ii. c. 4.

The Arians retort the same accusations of violence, cruelty, and persecution, against Athanasius. They say, "*Per vim, per cædem, per bellum, Alexandrinorum ecclesias deprædatus;*" and this, "*per pugnas et cædes gentilium.*" — *Decretum Synodi Orientalium Episcoporum apud Sardicam, apud S. Hilarium.*

"*Immensa autem confluxerat ad Sardicam multitudo sceleratorum omnium et perditorum, adventantium de Constantinopoli, de Alexandria, qui rei homicidiorum, rei sanguinis, rei cædis, rei latrociniorum, rei prædæ, rei spoliorum, nefandorumque omnium sacrilegiorum et criminum rei; qui altaria confregerunt, ecclesias incenderunt, domosque privatorum compilaverunt; profanatores mysteriorum, proditoresque sacramentorum Christi; que impiam sceleratamque hæreticorum doctrinam contra ecclesiæ fidem asserentes, sapientissimos presbyteros Dei, diaconos, sacerdotes, atrociter demactaverunt.*" — *Ibid.* 19. And this protest, full of these tremendous charges, was signed by the eighty seceding Eastern bishops.

irreconcilable extremes. The heretics had wandered away into the boundless regions of speculation; they had differed on some of the most important elementary principles of belief; they had rarely admitted any common basis for argument. Here the contending parties set out from nearly the same principles, admitted the same authority, and seemed, whatever their secret bias or inclination, to differ only on the import of one word. Their opinions appeared to be constantly approximating, yet found it impossible to unite. The Athanasians taunted the Arians with the infinite variations in their belief: Athanasius recounts no less than eleven creeds. But the Arians might have pleaded their anxiety to reconcile themselves to the Church, their earnest solicitude to make every advance towards a re-union, provided they might be excused the adoption of the one obnoxious word, the *Homoousion*, or *Consubstantialism*. But the inflexible orthodoxy of Athanasius will admit no compromise; nothing less than complete unity, not merely of expression, but of mental conception, will satisfy the rigor of the ecclesiastical dictator, who will permit no single letter, and, as far as he can detect it, no shadow of thought, to depart from his peremptory creed. He denounces his adversaries, for the least deviation, as enemies of Christ; he presses them with consequences drawn from their opinions; and, instead of spreading wide the gates of Christianity, he seems to unbar them with jealous reluctance, and to admit no one without the most cool and inquisitorial scrutiny into the most secret arcana of his belief.

In the writings of Athanasius is embodied the perfection of polemic divinity. His style, indeed, has no splendor, no softness, nothing

to kindle the imagination or melt the heart. Acute, even to subtlety, he is too earnest to degenerate into scholastic trifling. It is stern logic, addressed to the reason of those who admitted the authority of Christianity. There is no dispassionate examination, no candid philosophic inquiry, no calm statement of his adversaries' case, no liberal acknowledgment of the infinite difficulties of the subject, scarcely any consciousness of the total insufficiency of human language to trace the question to its depths; all is peremptory, dictatorial, imperious; the severe conviction of the truth of his own opinions, and the inference that none but culpable motives, either of pride or strife or ignorance, can blind his adversaries to their cogent and irrefragable certainty. Athanasius walks on the narrow and perilous edge of orthodoxy with a firmness and confidence which it is impossible not to admire. It cannot be doubted that he was deeply, intimately, persuaded that the vital power and energy, the truth, the consolatory force, of Christianity, entirely depended on the unquestionable elevation of the Saviour to the most absolute equality with the Parent Godhead. The ingenuity with which he follows out his own views of the consequences of their errors is wonderfully acute; but the thought constantly occurs, whether a milder and more conciliating tone would not have healed the wounds of afflicted Christianity; whether his lofty spirit is not conscious that his native element is that of strife rather than of peace.¹

Though nothing can contrast more strongly with the expansive and liberal spirit of primitive Christianity than the repellent tone of this exclusive theology,

¹ At a later period, Athanasius seems to have been less rigidly exclusive against the Semi-Arians. Compare Möhler, ii. p. 230.

yet this remarkable phasis of Christianity seems to have been necessary, and doubtless not without advantage to the permanence of the religion. With the civilization of mankind, Christianity was about to pass through the ordeal of those dark ages which followed the irruption of the barbarians. During this period, Christianity was to subsist as the conservative principle of social order and the sacred charities of life, the sole, if not always faithful, guardian of ancient knowledge, of letters, and of arts. But, in order to preserve its own existence, it assumed, of necessity, another form. It must have a splendid and imposing ritual to command the barbarous minds of its new proselytes, and one which might be performed by an illiterate priesthood; for the mass of the priesthood could not but be involved in the general darkness of the times. It must likewise have brief and definite formularies of doctrine. As the original languages, and even the Latin, fell into disuse, and before the modern languages of Europe were sufficiently formed to admit of translations, the sacred writings receded from general use; they became the depositaries of Christian

Necessity
of creeds
during the
succeeding
centuries.

doctrine, totally inaccessible to the laity, and almost as much so to the lower clergy. Creeds therefore became of essential importance to compress the leading points of Christian doctrine into a small compass. And, as the barbarous and ignorant mind cannot endure the vague and the indefinite, so it was essential that the main points of doctrine should be fixed and cast into plain and emphatic propositions. The theological language was firmly established before the violent breaking-up of society; and no more was required of the barbarian convert than to accept with uninquiring submission

the established formulary of the faith, and gaze in awe-struck veneration at the solemn ceremonial.

The Athanasian controversy powerfully contributed to establish the supremacy of the Roman pontiff. It became almost a contest between Eastern and Western Christendom; at least the West was neither divided like the East, nor submitted with the same comparatively willing obedience to the domination of Arianism under the imperial authority. It was necessary that some one great prelate should take the lead in this internecine strife. The only Western bishop whom his character would designate as this leader was Hosius, the Bishop of Cordova. But age had now disqualified this good man, whose moderation, abilities, and probably important services to Christianity in the conversion of Constantine, had recommended him to the common acceptance of the Christian world, as president of the council of Nicæa. Where this acknowledged superiority of character and talent was wanting, the dignity of the see would command the general respect; and what see could compete, at least in the West, with Rome? Antioch, Alexandria, or Constantinople could alone rival, in pretensions to Christian supremacy, the old metropolis of the empire: and those sees were either fiercely contested, or occupied by Arian prelates. Athanasius himself, by his residence, at two separate periods, at Rome, submitted, as it were, his cause to the Roman pontiff. Rome became the centre of the ecclesiastical affairs of the West: and, since the Trinitarian opinions eventually triumphed through the whole of Christendom, the firmness and resolution with which the Roman pontiffs, notwithstanding the temporary fall of Liberius, adhered to the orthodox

*Influence of
Athanasian
controversy
on the
growth of the
papal power.*

faith; their uncompromising attachment to Athanasius, who, by degrees, was sanctified and canonized in the memory of Christendom,—might be one groundwork for that belief in their infallibility, which, however it would have been repudiated by Cyprian, and never completely prevailed in the East, became throughout the West the inalienable spiritual heirloom of the Roman pontiffs. Christian history will hereafter show how powerfully this monarchical principle, if not established, yet greatly strengthened, by these consequences of the Athanasian controversy, tended to consolidate and so to maintain, in still expanding influence, the Christianity of Europe.¹

This conflict continued with unabated vigor till the close of the reign of Constantius. Arianism gradually assumed the ascendant, through the violence and the arts of the emperor; all the more distinguished of the orthodox bishops were in exile, or, at least, in disgrace. Though the personal influence of Athanasius was still felt throughout Christendom, his obscure place of concealment was probably unknown to the greater part of his own adherents. The aged Hosius had died in his apostasy. Hilary of Poitiers, the Bishop of Milan, and the violent Lucifer

¹ The orthodox Synod of Sardica admits the superior dignity of the successors of St. Peter. "*Hoc enim optimum et valde congruentissimum esse videbitur, si ad caput, id est, ad Petri Apostoli sedem, de singulis quibusque provinciis Domini referant sacerdotes.*"—*Epist. Syn. Sard. apud Hilarium, Fragm. Oper. Hist. ii. c. 9.* It was disclaimed with equal distinctness by the seceding Arians. "*Novam legem introducere putaverunt, ut Orientales Episcopi ab Occidentalibus judicarentur.*"—*Fragm. iii. c. 12.* In a subsequent clause, they condemn Julius, Bishop of Rome, by name. It is difficult to calculate the effect which would commonly be produced on men's minds by their involving in one common cause the two tenets, which, in fact, bore no relation to each other,—the orthodox belief in the Trinity, and the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome."—*Sozomen, iv. 11, 13; Theodoret, ii. 17; Philostorgius, iv. 3.*

of Cagliari, were in exile; and, though Constantius had consented to the return of Liberius to his see, he had returned with the disgrace of having consented to sign the new formulary framed at Sirmium, where the term "consubstantial," if not rejected, was, at least, suppressed. Yet the popularity of Liberius was undiminished, and the whole city indignantly rejected the insidious proposition of Constantius, that Liberius and his rival Felix should rule the see with conjoint authority. The parties had already come to blows, and even to bloodshed, when Felix, who, it was admitted, had never swerved from the creed of Nicæa, and whose sole offence was entering into communion with the Arians, either from moderation, or conscious of the inferiority of his party, withdrew to a neighboring city, where he soon closed his days, and relieved the Christians of Rome from the apprehension of a rival pontiff. The unbending resistance of the Athanasians was no doubt confirmed, not merely by the variations in the Arian creed, but by the new opinions which they considered its legitimate offspring, and which appeared to justify their worst apprehensions of its inevitable consequences.

Aetius formed a new sect, which not merely denied the consubstantiality, but the similitude of the Son to the Father. He was not only not Heresy of Aetius. of the same, but of a totally different, nature. Aetius, according to the account of his adversaries, was a bold and unprincipled adventurer;¹ and the career of a

¹ Socrates, ii. 35. Sozomen, iii. 15, iv. 12. Philostorg. iii. 15, 17. Suidas, voc. *Aetios*. Epiphan. Hæres. 76. Gregor. Nyss. contra Eunom.

The most curious part in the history of Aetius is his attachment to the Aristotelian philosophy. With him appears to have begun the long strife between Aristotelianism and Platonism in the Church. Aetius, to prove his unimaginative doctrines, employed the severe and prosaic categories of Ari-

person of this class is exemplified in his life. The son of a soldier, at one time condemned to death and to the confiscation of his property, Aetius became a humble artisan, first as a worker in copper, afterwards in gold. His dishonest practices obliged him to give up trade, but not before he had acquired some property. He attached himself to Paulinus, Bishop of Antioch; was expelled from the city by his successor; studied grammar at Anazarba; was encouraged by the Arian bishop of that see, named Athanasius; returned to Antioch; was ordained deacon; and again expelled the city. Discomfited in a public disputation with a Gnostic, he retired to Alexandria, where, being exercised in the art of rhetoric, he revenged himself on a Manichean, who died of shame. He then became a public itinerant teacher, practising, at the same time, his lucrative art of a goldsmith. The Arians rejected Aetius with no less earnest indignation than the orthodox, but they could not escape being implicated, as it were, in his unpopularity; and the odious Anomeans, those who denied the *similitude* of the Son to the Father, brought new discredit even on the more temperate partisans of the Arian creed. Another heresiarch, of a higher rank, still further brought disrepute on the Arian party. Macedonius, the Bishop of Constantinople, to the Arian tenet of the inequality of the Son to the Father, added the total denial of the divinity of the Holy Ghost.

Of Macedo-
nius.

Council still followed council. Though we may not concur with the Arian bishops in ascribing to their adversaries the whole blame of this perpetual tumult and confusion in the Christian world, caused by these

totle, repudiating the prevailing Platonic mode of argument used by Origen, and Clement of Alexandria. — Socrates, ii. c. 85.

incessant assemblages of the clergy, there must have been much melancholy truth in their statement. "The East and the West are in a perpetual state of restlessness and disturbance. Deserting our spiritual charges, abandoning the people of God, neglecting the preaching of the Gospel, we are hurried about from place to place, sometimes to great distances, some of us infirm with age, with feeble constitutions or ill health, and are sometimes obliged to leave our sick brethren on the road. The whole administration of the empire, of the emperor himself, the tribunes, and the commanders, at this fearful crisis of the state, are solely occupied with the lives and the condition of the bishops. The people are by no means unconcerned. The whole brotherhood watches in anxious suspense the event of these troubles; the establishment of post-horses, is worn out by our journeyings; and all on account of a few wretches, who, if they had the least remaining sense of religion, would say with the prophet Jonah, 'Take us up and cast us into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for we know that it is on our account that this great tempest is upon you.'"¹

The synod at Sirmium had no effect in reconciling the differences, or affirming the superiority of either party. A double council was appointed, of the Eastern prelates at Seleucia, of the Western at Rimini. The Arianism of Constantius himself had by this time degenerated still farther from the creed of Nicæa. Eudoxus, who had espoused the Anomean doctrines of Aetius, ruled his untractable but passive mind. The council of Rimini consisted of at least four hundred bishops, of whom not above

Council of
Rimini.

¹ Hilar., Oper. Hist. Fragm. xi. c. 25.

eighty were Arians. Their resolutions were firm and peremptory. They repudiated the Arian doctrines; they expressed their rigid adherence to the formulary of Nicæa. Ten bishops, however, of each party, were deputed to communicate their decrees to Constantius. The ten Arians were received with the utmost respect; their rivals, with every kind of slight and neglect. Insensibly the Athanasians were admitted to more intimate intercourse; the flatteries, perhaps the bribes, of the emperor prevailed; they returned, having signed a formulary directly opposed to their instructions. Their reception at first was unpromising; but by degrees the council, from which its firmest and most resolute members had gradually departed, and in which many poor and aged bishops still retained their seats, wearied, perplexed, worn out by the expense and discomfort of a long residence in a foreign city, consented to sign a creed in which the contested word, the Homousion, was carefully suppressed.¹ Arianism was thus deliberately adopted by a council, of which the authority was undisputed. The world, says Jerome, groaned to find itself Arian. But, on their return to their dioceses, the indignant prelates everywhere protested against the fraud and violence which had been practised against them. New persecutions followed: Gaudentius, Bishop of Rimini, lost his life.

The triumph of Arianism was far easier among the hundred and sixty bishops assembled at Seleucia. But it was more fatal to their cause: the Arians and Semi-Arians and Anomeans mingled in tumultuous

¹ It is curious enough, that the Latin language did not furnish terms to express this fine distinction. Some Western prelates, many of whom probably did not understand a word of Greek, proposed, "*jam usiæ et homousii nomina recedant quæ in divinis Scripturis de Deo, et Dei Filio, non inveniuntur scripta.*" — Apud Hilarium, *Oper. Hist. Fragm. ix.*

strife, and hurled mutual anathemas against each other.

The new council met at Constantinople. By some strange political or religious vicissitude, the party of the Anomeans triumphed, while Aetius, its author, was sent into banishment.¹ Macedonius was deposed; Eudoxus of Antioch was translated to the imperial see; and the solemn dedication of the Church of St. Sophia was celebrated by a prelate who denied the similitude of nature between the Father and the Son. The whole Christian world was in confusion; these fatal feuds penetrated almost as far as the Gospel itself had reached. The emperor, whose alternately partial vehemence and subtlety had inflamed rather than allayed the tumult, found his authority set at nought; a deep, stern, and ineradicable resistance opposed the imperial decrees. A large portion of the empire proclaimed aloud that there were limits to the imperial despotism; that there was a higher allegiance, which superseded that due to the civil authority; that in affairs of religion they would not submit to the appointment of superiors who did not profess their views of Christian orthodoxy.² The emperor himself, by mingling with almost fanatical passion and zeal in these controversies, at once lowered himself to the level of his subjects, and justified the

¹ Aetius and Eunomius seem to have been the heroes of the historian Philostorgius, fragments of whose history have been preserved by the pious hostility of Photius. This diminishes our regret for the loss of the original work, which would be less curious than a genuine Arian history. Philostorgius seems to object to the anti-materialist view of the Deity maintained by the Semi-Arian Eusebius, and, according to him, by Arius himself. He reproaches Eusebius with asserting the Deity to be incomprehensible and inconceivable: *ἄγνωστος καὶ ἀκατάληπτος*. — lib. i. 2, 3.

² Hilary quotes the sentence of St. Paul, "Ubi fides est, ibi et libertas est;" in allusion to the emperor's assuming the cognizance over religious questions. — *Oper. Hist. Fragm.* i. c. 5.

importance which they attached to these questions. If Constantius had firmly, calmly, and consistently enforced mutual toleration,—if he had set the example of Christian moderation and temper; if he had set his face solely against the stern refusal of Athanasius and his party to admit the Arians into communion,—he might perhaps have retained some influence over the contending parties. But he was not content without enforcing the dominance of the Arian party; he dignified Athanasius with the hatred of a personal enemy, almost of a rival; and his subjects, by his own apparent admission that these were questions of spiritual life and death, were compelled to postpone his decrees to those of God; to obey their bishops, who held the keys of heaven and hell, rather than Cæsar, who could only afflict them with civil disabilities, or penalties in this life.

CHAPTER VI.

Julian.

AMIDST all this intestine strife within the pale of Christianity, and this conflict between the civil and religious authorities concerning their respective limits, Paganism made a desperate effort to regain its lost supremacy. Julian has perhaps been somewhat unfairly branded with the ill-sounding name of Apostate. His Christianity was but the compulsory obedience of youth to the distasteful lessons of education, enforced by the hateful authority of a tyrannical relative. As early as the maturity of his reason, — at least, as soon as he dared to reveal his secret sentiments, — he avowed his preference for the ancient Paganism.

The most astonishing part of Julian's history is the development and partial fulfilment of all his vast designs during a reign of less than two years. His own age wondered at the rapidity with which the young emperor accomplished his military, civil, and religious schemes.¹ During his separate and subordinate command as Cæsar, his time was fully occupied with his splendid campaigns upon the Rhine.² Julian was the vindicator of the old majesty of the empire ;

¹ "Dicet aliquis: quomodo tam multa tam brevi tempore. Et rectè. Sed Imperator noster addit ad tempus quod otio suo detrahit. . . . Itaque grandævum jam imperium videbitur his, qui non ratione dierum et mensium, sed operum multitudine et effectarum rerum modo Juliani tempora metientur."

-- Mamertini Grat. Actio. c. xiv.

² Six years, from 355 to 361.

he threw back with a bold and successful effort the inroad of barbarism, which already threatened to overwhelm the Roman civilization of Gaul. During the

Short reign
of Julian.
A.D. 361-363. two unfinished years of his sole government, Julian had re-united the whole Roman empire under his single sceptre; he had reformed the army, the court, the tribunals of justice; he had promulgated many useful laws, which maintained their place in the jurisprudence of the empire; he had established peace on all the frontiers; he had organized a large and well-disciplined force to chastise the Persians for their aggressions on the eastern border, and, by a formidable diversion within their own territories, to secure the Euphratic provinces against the most dangerous rival of the Roman power. During all these engrossing cares of empire, he devoted himself with the zeal and activity of a mere philosopher and man of letters to those more tranquil pursuits. The conqueror of the Franks and the antagonist of Sapor delivered lectures in the schools, and published works, which, whatever may be thought of their depth and truth, display no mean powers of composition: as a writer, Julian will compete with most of his age. Besides all this, his vast and restless spirit contemplated, and had already commenced, nothing less than a total change in the religion of the empire; not merely the restoration of Paganism to the legal supremacy which it possessed before the reign of Constantine, and the degradation of Christianity into a private sect; but the actual extirpation of the new religion from the minds of men by the reviving energies of a philosophic, and at the same time profoundly religious, Paganism.

The genius of ancient Rome and of ancient Greece

might appear to revive in amicable union in the soul of Julian. He displayed the unmeasured military ambition, which turned the defensive war into a war of aggression on all the imper-
Character of Julian.
 illed frontiers; the broad and vigorous legislation, the unity of administration, the severer tone of manners, which belonged to the better days of Rome; so, too, the fine cultivation, the perspicuous philosophy, the lofty conceptions of moral greatness and purity, which distinguished the old Athenian. If in the former (the Roman military enterprise) he met eventually with the fate of Crassus or of Varus, rather than the glorious successes of Germanicus or Trajan, the times were more in fault than the general: if in the latter (the Grecian elevation and elegance of mind) Julian more resembled at times the affectation of the Sophist and the coarseness of the Cynic than the lofty views and exquisite harmony of Plato or the practical wisdom of Socrates, the effete and exhausted state of Grecian letters and philosophy must likewise be taken into the account.

In the uncompleted two years of his sole empire,¹ Julian had advanced so far in the restoration of the internal vigor and unity of administration, that it is doubtful how much further, but for the fatal Persian campaign, he might have fulfilled the visions of his noble ambition. He might have averted, at least for a time, the terrible calamities which burst upon the Roman world during the reign of Valentinian and Valens. But, difficult and desperate as the enterprise might appear, the re-organization of a decaying empire was less impracticable than the restoration of an all

¹ One year, eight months, and twenty-three days. — La Bleterre, *Vie de Julien*, p. 494.

but extinguished religion. A religion may awaken from indifference, and resume its dominion over the minds of men; but not if supplanted by a new form of faith, which has identified itself with the opinions and sentiments of the general mind. It can never dethrone a successful invader, who has been recognized as a lawful sovereign. And Christianity (could the clear and sagacious mind of Julian be blind to this essential difference?) had occupied the whole soul of man with a fulness and confidence which belonged, and could belong, to no former religion. It had intimately blended together the highest truths of philosophy with the purest morality; the loftiest speculation with the most practical spirit. The vague theory of another life, timidly and dimly announced by the later Paganism, could ill compete with the deep and intense conviction, now rooted in the hearts of a large part of mankind by Christianity; the source in some of harrowing fears, in others of the noblest hopes.

Julian united in his own mind, and attempted to work into his new religion, the two incongruous characters of a zealot for the older superstitions and for the more modern philosophy of Greece. He had fused together, in that which appeared to him an harmonious system, Homer and Plato. He thought that the whole ritual of sacrifice would combine with that allegoric interpretation of the ancient mythology, which undeified the greater part of the Heathen Pantheon. All that Paganism had borrowed from Christianity, it had rendered comparatively cold and powerless. The one Supreme Deity was a name and an abstract conception, a metaphysical being. The visible representative of the Deity, the Sun, which was in general an essential part of the

Religion of
Julian.

new system, was, after all, foreign and Oriental; it belonged to the genuine mythology neither of Greece nor Rome. The Theurgy, or awful and sublime communion of the mind with the spiritual world, was either too fine and fanciful for the vulgar belief, or associated, in the dim confusion of the popular conception, with that magic, against which the laws of Rome had protested with such stern solemnity; and which, therefore, however eagerly pursued and revered with involuntary awe, was always associated with impressions of its unlawfulness and guilt. Christianity, on the other hand, had completely incorporated with itself all that it had admitted from Paganism, or which, if we may so speak, constituted the Pagan part of Christianity. The Heathen Theurgy, even in its purest form, its dreamy intercourse with the intermediate race of demons, was poor and ineffective, compared with the diabolic and angelic agency, which became more and more mingled up with Christianity. Where these subordinate demons were considered by the more philosophic Pagan to have been the older deities of the popular faith, it was rather a degradation of the ancient worship: where this was not the case, this fine perception of the spiritual world was the secret of the initiate few, rather than the all-pervading superstition of the many. The Christian demonology, on the other hand, which began to be heightened and multiplied by the fantastic imagination of the monks, brooding in their solitudes, seemed at least to grow naturally out of the religious system. The gradually darkening into superstition was altogether imperceptible, and harmonized entirely with the general feelings of the time. Christianity was a living plant, which imparted its vitality to the foreign

suckers grafted upon it: the dead and sapless trunk of Paganism withered even the living boughs which were blended with it, by its own inevitable decay.

On the other hand, Christianity at no period could appear in a less amiable and attractive light Unfavorable state of Christianity. to a mind pre-indisposed to its reception. It was in a state of universal fierce and implacable discord: the chief cities of the empire had run with blood shed in religious quarrels. The sole object of the conflicting parties seemed to be to confine to themselves the temporal and spiritual blessings of the faith; to exclude as many as they might from that eternal life, and to anathematize to that eternal death, which were revealed by the Gospel, and placed, according to the general belief, under the special authority of the clergy. Society seemed to be split up into irreconcilable parties: to the animosities of Pagan and Christian were now added those of Christian and Christian. Christianity had passed through its earlier period of noble moral enthusiasm; of the energy with which it addressed its first proclamation of its doctrines to man; of the dignity with which it stood aloof from the intrigues and vices of the world; and of its admirable constancy under persecution. It had not fully attained its second state, as a religion generally established in the minds of men by a dominant hierarchy of unquestioned authority. Its great truths had no longer the striking charm of novelty; nor were they yet universally and profoundly implanted in the general mind by hereditary transmission or early education, and ratified by the unquestioning sanction of ages.

The youthful education of Julian had been, it might almost appear, studiously and skilfully conducted, so

as to show the brighter side of Paganism, the darker of Christianity. His infant years had been clouded by the murder of his father. How far his mind might retain any impression of that awful event, or remembrance of the place of his refuge, the Christian church, or of the saviour of his life, the virtuous Bishop of Arethusa, it is of course impossible to conjecture. But Julian's first instructor was a man who, born a Scythian and educated in Greece,¹ united the severe morality of his ruder ancestors with the elegance of Grecian accomplishments. He enforced upon his young pupil the strictest modesty, contempt for the licentious or frivolous pleasures of youth, for the theatre and the bath. At the same time, while he delighted his mind with the poetry of Homer, his graver studies were the Greek and Latin languages, the elements of the philosophy of Greece, and music, that original and attractive element of Grecian education.² At the age of about fourteen or fifteen, Julian was shut up, with his brother Gallus, in Macellæ, a fortress in Asia Minor, and committed in this sort of honorable prison to the rigid superintendence of ecclesiastics. By his Christian instructors, the young and ardent Julian was bound down to a course Education of Julian. of the strictest observances, the midnight vigil, the fast, the long and weary prayer, and visits to the tombs of martyrs, rather than a wise and rational initiation in the genuine principles of the Gospel, or a judicious familiarity with the originality, the beauty, and the depth of the Christian morals and Christian religion. He was taught the virtue of implicit submission to his ecclesiastical superiors; the munificence

¹ His name was Mardonius. — Julian. ad Athen. et Misopogon. Socrat. E. H. iii. 1. Amm. Marc. xxii. 12.

² See the high character of this man in the Misopogon, p. 351.

of conferring gifts upon the churches : with his brother Gallus he was permitted, or rather incited, to build a chapel over the tomb of St Mammas.¹ For six years, he bitterly asserts, he was deprived of every kind of useful instruction.² Julian and his brother, it is even said, were ordained readers, and officiated in public in that character. But the passages of the sacred writings, with which he might thus have become acquainted, were imposed as lessons ; and in the mind of Julian, Christianity, thus taught and enforced, was inseparably connected with the irksome and distasteful feelings of confinement and degradation. No youths of his own rank, or of ingenuous birth, were permitted to visit his prison ; he was reduced, as he indignantly declares, to the debasing society of slaves.

At the age of twenty, Julian was permitted to reside in Constantinople, afterwards at Nicomedia. The jealousy of Constantius in Constantinople was excited by the popular demeanor, sober manners, and the reputation for abilities, which directed all eyes towards his youthful nephew. He dismissed Julian to the more dangerous and fatal residence in Nicomedia, in the neighborhood of the most celebrated and most attractive of the Pagan party. The most faithful adherents of Paganism were that class with which the tastes and inclinations of Julian brought him into close intimacy, — the sophists, the men of letters, the

¹ Julian is said even thus early to have betrayed his secret inclinations : in his declamations he took delight in defending the cause of Paganism against Christianity. A prophetic miracle foreboded his future course. While this church rose expeditiously under the labor of Gallus, the obstinate stones would not obey that of Julian : an invisible hand disturbed the foundations, and threw down all his work. Gregory Nazianzum declares that he had heard this from eye-witnesses ; Sozomen, from those who had heard it from eye-witnesses. — Gregor. Or. iii. p. 59, 61. Sozomen, v. 2.

² Πάντος μαθήματος σπουδαίον.

rhetoricians, the poets, the philosophers. He was forbidden, indeed, perhaps by the jealousy of his appointed instructor Ecebolus, who at this time conformed to the religion of the court, to hear the dangerous lectures of Libanius, equally celebrated for his eloquence and his ardent attachment to the old religion. But Julian obtained his writings, which he ^{Intercourse with the philosophers.} devoured with all the delight of a stolen enjoyment.¹ Julian formed an intimate acquaintance with the heads of the philosophic school, with Ædesius, his pupils Eusebius and Chrysanthius, and at last with the famous Maximus. These men are accused of practising the most subtle and insidious arts upon the character of their ardent and youthful votary. His grave and meditative mind imbibed with eager delight the solemn mysticism of their tenets, which were impressed more deeply by significant and awful ceremonies. A magician at Nicomedia first excited his curiosity, and tempted him to enter on these exciting courses. At Pergamus he visited the aged Ædesius; and the manner in which these philosophers passed Julian onward from one to another, as if through successive stages of initiation in their mysterious doctrines, bears the appearance of a deliberate scheme to work him up to their purposes. The aged Ædesius addressed him as the favored child of wisdom; declined the important charge of his instruction, but commended him to his pupils, Eusebius and Chrysanthius, who could unlock the inexhaustible source of light and wisdom. "If you should attain the supreme felicity of being initiated in their mysteries, you will blush to have been born a man, you will no longer endure the name." The pupils of Ædesius fed the

¹ Liban. Orat. Par. t. i. p. 526.

greedy mind of the proselyte with all their stores of wisdom, and then skilfully unfolded the greater fame of Maximus. Eusebius professed to despise the vulgar arts of wonder-working, at least in comparison with the purification of the soul; but he described the power of Maximus in terms to which Julian could not listen without awe and wonder. Maximus had led them into the temple of Hecate; he had burned a few grains of incense, he had murmured a hymn, and the statue of the goddess was seen to smile. They were awe-struck, but Maximus had declared that this was nothing. The lamps throughout the temple shall immediately burst into light: as he spoke, they had kindled and blazed up. "But of these mystical wonder-workers we think lightly," proceeded the skilful speaker: "do thou, like us, think only of the internal purification of the reason." "Keep to your book," broke out the impatient youth: "this is the man I seek."¹ Julian hastened to Ephesus. The person and demeanor of Maximus were well suited to keep up the illusion. He was a venerable man, with a long white beard, with keen eyes, great activity, soft and persuasive voice, rapid and fluent eloquence. By Maximus, who summoned Chrysanthius to him, Julian was brought into direct communion with the invisible world. The faithful and officious Genii from this time watched over Julian in peace and war; they conversed with him in his slumbers, they warned him of dangers, they conducted his military operations. Thus far we proceed on the authority of Pagan writers: the scene of his solemn initiation rests on the more doubtful testimony of Christian historians,² which, as they were

¹ Eunapius, in Vit. *Ædesii et Maximi*.

² Greg. Naz. Orat. iii. 71. Theodoret, iii. 3.

little likely to be admitted into the secrets of these dark and hidden rites, is to be received with grave suspicion; more especially as they do not scruple to embellish these rites with Christian miracle. Julian was led first into a temple, then into a subterranean crypt, in almost total darkness. The evocations were made; wild and terrible sounds were heard; spectres of fire gibbered around. Julian, in his sudden terror, made the sign of the cross. All disappeared, all was silent. Twice this took place, and Julian could not but express to Maximus his astonishment at the power of this sign. "The gods," returned the dexterous philosopher, "will have no communion with so profane a worshipper." From this time, it is said, on better authority,¹ Julian burst, like a lion in his wrath, the slender ties which bound him to Christianity. But he was still constrained to dissemble his secret apostasy. His enemies declared that he redoubled his outward zeal for Christianity, and even shaved his head in conformity with the monastic practice. His brother Gallus had some suspicion of his secret views, and sent the Arian bishop Aetius to confirm him in the faith.

How far Julian, in this time of danger, stooped to disguise his real sentiments, it were rash to decide. But it would by no means commend Conduct of Constantius to Julian. Christianity to the respect and attachment of Julian, that it was the religion of his imperial relative. Popular rumor did not acquit Constantius of the murder of Julian's father; and Julian himself afterwards publicly avowed his belief in this crime.² He had probably owed his own escape to his infant age and to the activ-

¹ Libanius.

² Ad Senatam Populumque Atheniensen. Julian. Oper. p. 270.

ity of his friends. Up to this time, his life had been the precarious and permissive boon of a jealous tyrant, who had inflicted on him every kind of degrading restraint. His place of education had been a prison, and his subsequent liberty was watched with suspicious vigilance. The personal religion of Constantius, his embarking with alternate violence and subtlety in theological disputations, his vacillation between timid submission to priestly authority and angry persecution, were not likely to make a favorable impression on a wavering mind. The Pagans themselves, if we may take the best historian of the time as the representative of their opinions,¹ considered that Constantius dishonored the Christian religion by mingling up its perspicuous simplicity with anile superstition. If there was little genuine Christianity in the theological discussions of Constantius, there had been less of its beautiful practical spirit in his conduct to Julian. It had allayed no jealousy, mitigated no hatred; it had not restrained his temper from overbearing tyranny, nor kept his hands clean from blood. And now, the death of his brother Gallus, to whom he seems to have cherished warm attachment, was a new evidence of the capricious and unhumanized tyranny of Constantius, a fearful omen of the uncertainty of his own life under such a despotism. He had beheld the advancement and the fate of his brother; and his future destiny presented the alternative either of ignominious obscurity or fatal distinction. His life was spared only through the casual interference of the humane and enlightened empress; and her influence gained but a slow and difficult triumph over the malignant eunuchs who ruled the mind of Constantius. But he had been

¹ Ammianus Marcellinus.

exposed to the ignominy of arrest and imprisonment, and a fearful suspense of seven weary months.¹ His motions, his words, were watched; his very heart scrutinized; he was obliged to suppress the natural emotions of grief for the death of his brother; to impose silence on his fluent eloquence, and act the hypocrite to nature as well as to religion.

His retreat was Athens, of all cities in the empire that, probably, in which Paganism still maintained the highest ascendancy, and appeared Julian at Athens. in the most seductive form. The political religion of Rome had its stronghold in the capital; that of Greece, in the centre of intellectual culture and of the fine arts. Athens might still be considered the university of the empire; from all quarters, particularly of the East, young men of talent and promise crowded to complete their studies in those arts of grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, which, however, by no means disdained by the Christians, might still be considered as more strictly attached to the Pagan interest.

Among the Christian students who at this time paid the homage of their residence to this great centre of intellectual culture, were Basil, and Gregory of Nazianzum. The latter, in the orations with which in later times he condemned the memory of Julian, has drawn with a coarse and unfriendly hand the picture of his person and manners. His manners did injustice to the natural beauties of his person, and betrayed his restless, inquisitive, and somewhat incoherent character. The Christian (we must remember, indeed, that these predictions were published subsequent to their fulfilment, and that, by their own account, Julian had

¹ Ἐνὲ δὲ ἀφῆκε μόγις, ἐπὶ τὰ μηνῶν ὅλων ἐλκύσας τῆδε κρκεῖσι. -- Ad. S. P. Ath. p. 272.

already betrayed, in Asia Minor, his secret propensities) already discerned in the unquiet and unsubmissive spirit the future apostate. But the general impression which Julian made was far more favorable. His quickness, his accomplishments, the variety and extent of his information, his gentleness, his eloquence, and even his modesty, gained universal admiration, and strengthened the interest excited by his forlorn and perilous position.

Of all existing Pagan rites, those which still maintained the greatest respect, and would impress a mind like Julian's with the profoundest veneration, were the Eleusinian mysteries. They united the sanctity of almost immemorial age with some similitude to the Platonic Paganism of the day, at least sufficient for the ardent votaries of the latter to claim their alliance. The Hierophant of Eleusis was admitted to be the most potent theurgist in the world.¹ Julian honored him, or was honored by his intimacy; and the initiation in the Mystery of those emphatically called the Goddesses, with all its appalling dramatic machinery, and its high speculative and imaginative doctrines, the impenetrable, the ineffable tenets of the sanctuary, consummated the work of Julian's conversion.

The elevation of Julian to the rank of Cæsar was at length extorted from the necessities, rather than freely bestowed by the love, of the emperor. Nor did the jealous hostility of Constantius cease with this apparent reconciliation. Constantius, with cold suspicion, thwarted all his

Julian
initiated at
Eleusis.

Elevation
of Julian to
the rank of
Cæsar.

¹ Compare (in Eunap. Vit. Ædes. p. 52, edit. Boissonade) the prophecy of the dissolution of Paganism ascribed to this pontiff; a prediction which *may* do credit to the sagacity, or evince the apprehensions of the seer, but *will* on no means claim the honor of divine foreknowledge.

measures, crippled his resources, and appropriated to himself, with unblushing injustice, the fame of his victories.¹ Julian's assumption of the purple, whether forced upon him by the ungovernable attachment of his soldiery, or prepared by his own subtle ambition, was justified, and perhaps compelled, by the base ingratitude of Constantius; and by his manifest, if not avowed, resolution of preparing the ruin of Julian, by removing his best troops to the East.²

The timely death of Constantius alone prevented the deadly warfare in which the last of the race of Constantine were about to contest the empire. The dying bequest of that empire to Julian, said to have been made by the penitent Constantius, could not efface the recollection of those long years of degradation, of jealousy, of avowed or secret hostility; still less could it allay the dislike or contempt of Julian for his weak and insolent predecessor, who, governed by eunuchs, wasted the precious time which ought to have been devoted to the cares of the empire, in idle theological discussions, or quarrels with contending ecclesiastics. The part in the character of the deceased emperor least likely to find favor in the sight of his successor Julian was his religion. The unchristian Christianity of Constantius must bearsome part of the guilt of Julian's apostasy.

Up to the time of his revolt against Constantius, Julian had respected the dominant Christianity. The

¹ Ammianus, l. xv. 8, *et seqq.* Socrates, iii. 1. Sozomen, v. n. La Bleterie, *Vie de Julien*, 89 *et seqq.* The campaigns of Julian, in La Bleterie, lib. ii. — Gibbon, iv. pp. 1, 4.

The well-known passage in Ammianus shows the real sentiments of the court towards Julian. "In odium venit cum victoriis suis capella non homo. ut hirsutum Julianum carpentes appellantesque loquacem talpam, et purpuratam simiam, et litterionem Græcum." — Amm. Marc. xvii. 11.

² Amm. Marc. xx. &c. Zosimus, iii. Liban. Or. x. Jul. ad S. P. Q. A.

religious acts of his early youth, performed in obedience to, or under the influence of, his instructors; or his submissive conformity, when his watchful enemies were eager for his life,—ought hardly to convict him of deliberate hypocrisy. In Gaul, still under the strictest suspicion, and engaged in almost incessant warfare, he would have few opportunities to betray his secret sentiments. But Jupiter was consulted in his private chamber, and sanctioned his assumption of the imperial purple.¹ And no sooner had he marched into Illyria, an independent emperor at the head of his own army, than he threw aside all concealment, and proclaimed himself a worshipper of the ancient gods of Paganism. The auspices were taken; and the act of divination was not the less held in honor, because the fortunate soothsayer announced the death of Constantius. The army followed the example of their victorious general. At his command, the neglected temples resumed their ceremonies; he adorned them with offerings; he set the example of costly sacrifices.² The Athenians in particular obeyed with alacrity the commands of the new emperor; the honors of the priesthood became again a worthy object of contest; two distinguished females claimed the honor of representing the genuine Eumolpidæ, and of officiating in the Parthenon. Julian, already anxious to infuse as much of the real Christian spirit as he could into reviving Paganism, exhorted the contending parties to peace and unity, as the most acceptable sacrifice to the gods.

¹ Amm. xxi. 1.

² The Western army was more easily practised upon than the Eastern soldiers at a subsequent period. *Θρησκειόμεν τοὺς Θεοὺς ἀναφανδὸν καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ συγκατέλθοντος αὐοὶ στρατοπέδου θεοσεβῆς ἐστίν.*—Epist. xxxviii.

The death of Constantius left the whole Roman world open to the civil and religious schemes which lay, floating and unshaped, before the imagination of Julian. The civil reforms were executed with necessary severity, but, in some instances, with more than necessary cruelty. The elevation of Paganism into a rational and effective faith; and the depression and even the eventual extinction of Christianity, were the manifest objects of Julian's religious policy. Julian's religion was the eclectic Paganism of the new Platonic philosophy. The chief speculative tenet was Oriental rather than Greek or Roman. The one immaterial, inconceivable Father dwelt alone; though his majesty was held in reverence, the direct and material object of worship was the great Sun,¹ the living and animated, and propitious and beneficent image of the immaterial Father.² Below this primal Deity and his glorious image, there was room for the whole Pantheon of subordinate deities, of whom, in like manner, the stars were the material representatives; but who possessed invisible powers, and manifested themselves in various ways,—in dreams and visions, through prodigies and oracles, the flights of birds, and the signs in the sacrificial victims.³ This vague and comprehensive Paganism might include under its dominion all classes and nations which adhered to the

¹ Τὸν μέγαν Ἥλιον, τὸ ζῶν ἄγαλμα καὶ ἐμφυχον, καὶ εὐνοῦν καὶ ἀγαθοεργόν, τοῦ νοήτον πάτρος.

² Compare Julian. apud Cyril., lib. ii. p. 65.

³ Julian asserts the various offices of the subordinate deities, apud Cyril., lib. vii. p. 235.

One of the most remarkable illustrations of this wide-spread worship of the Sun is to be found in the address of Julius Firmicus Maternus to the emperors Constantius and Constans. He introduces the Sun as remonstrating against the dishonorable honors thus heaped upon him, and protests against being responsible for the acts, or involved in the fate, of Liber, Attys or

Heathen worship ; the Oriental, the Greek, the Roman, even, perhaps, the Northern barbarian, would not refuse to admit the simplicity of the primal article of the creed, spreading out as it did below into the boundless latitude of Polytheism. The immortality of the soul appears to follow as an inference from some of Julian's Platonic doctrines ;¹ but it is remarkable how rarely it is put forward as an important point of difference in his religious writings ; while, in his private correspondence, he falls back to the dubious and hesitating language of the ancient Heathens, — " I am not one of those who disbelieve the immortality of the soul : but the gods alone can know ; man can only conjecture that secret."² But his best consolation on the loss of friends was the saying of the Grecian philosopher to Darius, that, if he would find three persons who had not suffered the like calamities, he would restore the king's beautiful wife to life.³ Julian's dying language, however, though still vague and allied to the old Pantheistic system, sounds more like serene confidence in some future state of being.

The first care of Julian was to restore the outward form of Paganism to its former splendor, and to infuse the vigor of reviving youth into the antiquated system. The temples were everywhere to resume their ancient magnificence ; the municipalities were charged with the expense of these

Restoration
of Paganism.

Osiris. " Nolo ut errori vestro nomen meum fomenta suppeditet. . . . Quicquid sum simpliciter Deo pareo, nec aliud volo de me intelligatis, nisi quod videtis." — c. 8.

¹ Lib. ii. 58.

² Οὐ γὰρ δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν τῶν πεπεισμένων τὰς ψυχὰς ἥτοι προκατάλλυσθαι τῶν σωμάτων ἢ συναπόλλυσθαι. . . . Ὡς τοῖς μὲν ἀνθρώποις ἀρμόζει περὶ τοιούτων εἰκάζειν, ἐπίστασαι δὲ αὐτὰ τοὺς θεοὺς ἀνάγκη. — Epist. lxiii. p. 452.

³ Epistle to Amerius on the loss of his wife. — Ep. xxvii. p. 412

costly renovations. Where they had been destroyed by the zeal of the Christians, large fines were levied on the churches, and became, as will hereafter appear, a pretext for grinding exaction, and sometimes cruel persecution. It assessed on the whole community the penalty merited, perhaps, only by the rashness of a few zealots; it revived outrages almost forgotten, and injuries perpetrated, perhaps with the sanction, unquestionably with the connivance, of the former government. In many instances, it may have revenged on the innocent and peaceful the crimes of the avaricious and irreligious, who either plundered under the mask of Christian zeal, or seized the opportunity when the zeal of others might secure their impunity. That which takes place in all religious revolutions had occurred to a considerable extent: the powerful had seized the opportunity of plundering the weaker party for their own advantage. The eunuchs and favorites of the court had fattened on the spoil of the temples.¹ If these men had been forced to regorge their ill-gotten gains, justice might have approved the measure; but their crimes were unfairly visited on the whole Christian body. The extent to which the ruin and spoliation of the temples had been carried in the East, may be estimated from the tragic lamentations of Libanius. The soul of Julian, according to the orator, burned for empire, in order to restore the ancient order of things.

In some respects, the success of Julian answered the high-wrought expectations of his partisans. His panegyrist indulges in this lofty language: "Thou,

¹ "Pasti templorum spoliis" is the strong expression of Ammianus. Libanius says, that some persons had built themselves houses from the materials of the temples. Χρήματα δὲ ἐτέλουν οἱ τοῖς τῶν ἱερῶν λίθοις σφίσειν αὐτοῖς οἰκίας ἐγείροντες. — Orat. Parent. p. 504.

then, I say, O mightiest emperor ! hast restored to the republic the expelled and banished virtues ; thou hast rekindled the study of letters ; thou hast not only delivered from her trial Philosophy, suspected heretofore and deprived of her honors, and even arraigned as a criminal, but hast clothed her in purple, crowned her with jewels, and seated her on the imperial throne. We may now look on the heavens, and contemplate the stars with fearless gaze, who, a short time ago, like the beasts of the field, fixed our downward and grovelling vision on the earth.”¹ “First of all,” says Libanius, “he re-established the exiled religion, building, restoring, embellishing the temples. Everywhere were altars and fires, and the blood and fat of sacrifice, and smoke and sacred rites, and diviners fearlessly performing their functions. And on the tops of mountains were pipings and processions, and the sacrificial ox, which was at once an offering to the gods and a banquet to men.”² The private temple in the palace of Julian, in which he worshipped daily, was sacred to the Sun ; but he founded altars to all the gods. He looked with especial favor on those cities which had retained their temples ; with abhorrence on those which had suffered them to be destroyed, or to fall to ruin.³

Julian so entirely misapprehended Christianity, as to attribute its success and influence to its external organization, rather than to its internal authority over the soul of man. He thought that the religion grew out of the sacerdotal power, not that the sacerdotal power was but the vigorous development of the religion.

¹ Mam. Grat. Act. c. xxiii. This clause refers, no doubt, to astrology and divination.

² See v. l. p. 529, one among many passages ; likewise, the *Oratio pro Templis*, and the *Monodia*.

³ Orat. Parent. p. 564.

He fondly supposed that the imperial edict, and the authority of the government, could supply the place of profound religious sentiment; and transform the whole Pagan priesthood, whether attached to the dissolute worship of the East, the elegant ceremonial of Greece, or the graver ritual of Rome, into a serious, highly moral, and blameless hierarchy. The emperor was to be at once the supreme head and the model of this new sacerdotal order. The sagacious mind of Julian might have perceived the dangerous power, growing up in the Christian episcopate, which had already encroached upon the imperial authority, and began to divide the allegiance of the world. His political apprehensions may have concurred with his religious animosities, in not merely endeavoring to check the increase of this power, but in desiring to concentrate again in the imperial person both branches of authority. The supreme pontificate of Paganism had, indeed, passed quietly down with the rest of the imperial titles and functions; but the interference of the Christian emperors in ecclesiastical affairs had been met with resistance, obeyed only with sullen reluctance, or but in deference to the strong arm of power. The doubtful issue of the conflict between the emperor and his religious antagonist might awaken reasonable alarm for the majesty of the empire. If, on the other hand, Julian should succeed in re-organizing the Pagan priesthood in efficiency, respect, and that moral superiority which now belonged to the Christian ecclesiastical system, the supreme pontificate, instead of being a mere appellation or an appendage to the imperial title, would be an office of unlimited influence and authority.¹ The emperor would be the undisputed

¹ See the curious fragment of the sixty-second epistle (p. 450), in which

and unrivalled head of the religion of the empire; the whole sacerdotal order would be at his command: Paganism, instead of being, as heretofore, a confederacy of different religions, an aggregate of local systems of worship, each under its own tutelar deity, would become a well-regulated monarchy, with its provincial, civic, and village priesthoods, acknowledging the supremacy, and obeying the impulse, of the high imperial functionary. Julian admitted the distinction between the priesthood and the laity.¹ In every province a supreme pontiff was to be appointed, charged with a superintendence over the conduct of the inferior priesthood, and armed with authority to suspend or to depose those who should be guilty of any indecent irregularity. The whole priesthood were to be sober, chaste, temperate in all things. They were to abstain, not merely from loose society; but, in a spirit diametrically opposite to the old religion, were rarely to be seen at public festivals, never where women mingled in them.² In private houses, they were only to be present at the moderate banquets of the virtuous; they were never to be seen drinking in taverns, or exercising any base or sordid trade. The priesthood were to stand aloof from society, and only mingle with it to infuse their own grave decency and unimpeachable moral tone. The theatre, that second temple, as it might be called, of the older religion, was sternly proscribed; so entirely was it considered sunk from its high religious character, so

Julian asserts his supremacy, not merely as Pontifex Maximus, but as holding a high rank among the worshippers of Cybele. Ἐγὼ τοίνυν ἐπειδὴ πᾶρ εἰμι κατὰ μὲν τὰ πάτρια μεγάλῃ Ἀρχιερεὺς, ἔλαχον δὲ νῦν καὶ τοῦ Διόνυμου προφητεύειν.

¹ Ἐπὲλ σοὶ ποῦ μέτεστιν ἐμπείριας (ὅλως) τῶν δικαίων, ὃς οὐκ οἶσθα τὸ μὴν ἱερεὺς, τί δὲ ἰδιώτης. — *Fragm. Epist. lxii.*

² See *Epist. xlix.*

incapable of being restored to its old moral influence. They were to avoid all books, poetry, or tales, which might inflame their passions; to abstain altogether from those philosophical writings which subverted the foundations of religious belief, those of the Pyrrhonists and Epicureans, which Julian asserts had happily fallen into complete neglect, and had almost become obsolete. They were to be diligent and liberal in almsgiving, and to exercise hospitality on the most generous scale. The Jews had no beggars; the Christians maintained, indiscriminately, all applicants to their charity; it was a disgrace to the Pagans to be inattentive to such duties; and the authority of Homer is alleged to show the prodigal hospitality of the older Greeks. They were to establish houses of ^{His} reception for strangers in every city, and ^{charitable} ^{institutions} thus to rival or surpass the generosity of the Christians. Supplies of corn from the public granaries were assigned for these purposes, and placed at the disposal of the priests, partly for the maintenance of their attendants, partly for these pious uses. They were to pay great regard to the burial of the dead, a subject on which Grecian feeling had always been peculiarly sensitive, particularly of strangers. The benevolent institutions of Christianity were ^{imitated} ^{from Chris-} ^{tianity.} to be imitated and associated to Paganism.

A tax was to be levied in every province for the maintenance of the poor, and distributed by the priesthood. Hospitals for the sick and for indigent strangers of every creed were to be formed in convenient places. The Christians, not without justice, called the emperor "the ape of Christianity." Of all homage to the Gospel, this was the most impressive and sincere; and we are astonished at the blindness of Julian in

not perceiving that these changes, which thus enforced his admiration, were the genuine and permanent results of the religion ; but the disputes and strifes and persecutions, the accidental and temporary effects of human passions awakened by this new and violent impulse on the human mind.

Something like an universal ritual formed part of the design of Julian. Three times a day prayer
 Ritual. was to be publicly offered in the temples. The powerful aid of music, so essential a part of the older and better Grecian instruction, and of which the influence is so elevating to the soul,¹ was called in to impress the minds of the worshippers. Each temple was to have its organized band of choristers. A regular system of alternate chanting was introduced. It would be curious, if it were possible, to ascertain whether the Grecian temples received back their own music and their alternately responding chorus from the Christian churches.

Julian would invest the Pagan priesthood in that respect, or rather that commanding majesty,
 Respect for temples. with which the profound reverence of the Christian world arrayed their hierarchy. Solemn silence was to reign in the temples. All persons in authority were to leave their guards at the door when they entered the hallowed precincts. The emperor himself forbade the usual acclamations on his entrance into the presence of the gods. Directly he touched the sacred threshold, he became a private man.

It is said that he meditated a complete course of religious instruction. Schoolmasters, cate-
 Religious instruction. chists, preachers, were to teach, — are we to suppose the Platonic philosophy? — as part of the

¹ On Music, see Epist. lvi.

religion. A penitential form was to be drawn up for the re-admission of transgressors into the fold. Instead of throwing open the temples to the free and promiscuous reception of apostatizing Christians, the value of the privilege was to be enhanced by the difficulty of attaining it.¹ They were to be slowly admitted to the distinction of rational believers in the gods. The *dii averruncatores* (atoning deities) were to be propitiated; the believers were to pass through different degrees of initiation. Prayers, expiations, lustrations, severe trials, could alone purify their bodies and their minds, and make them worthy participants in the Pagan mysteries.

But Julian was not content with this moral regeneration of Paganism; he attempted to bring back the public mind to all the sanguinary ritual of sacrifice, to which the general sentiment had been gradually growing unfamiliar and repugnant. The time was passed when men could consider the favor of the gods propitiated according to the number of slaughtered beasts. The philosophers must have smiled in secret at the superstition of the philosophic emperor. Julian himself washed off his Christian baptism by the new Oriental rite of aspersion by blood, the *Taurobolia* or *Kriobolia* of the *Mithriac* mysteries; ^{Animal sacrifices.} ² he was regenerated anew to Paganism.³ This, indeed, was a secret ceremony; but Julian was perpetually seen, himself wielding the sacrificial knife, and exploring with his own hands the reeking entrails of the victims, to learn the secrets of futurity. The enormous expenditure lavished on the sacrifices, the heca-

¹ See Epist. lii.

² Gregor. Naz. iii. p. 70.

³ The person initiated descended into a pit or trench; and through a kind of sieve, or stone pierced with holes, the blood of the bull or the ram was poured over his whole person.

tombs of cattle, the choice birds from all quarters, drained the revenue.¹ The Western soldiers, especially the intemperate Gauls, indulged in the feasts on the victims to such excess, and mingled them with such copious libations of wine, as to be carried to their tents amid the groans and mockeries of the more sober.² The gifts to diviners, soothsayers, and impostors of all classes, offended equally the more wise and rational. In the public as well as private conduct of Julian, there was a Heathen Pharisaism, an attention to minute and trifling observances, which could not but excite contempt even in the more enlightened of his own party. Every morning and evening he offered sacrifice to the sun; he rose at night to offer the same homage to the moon and stars. Every day brought the rite of some other god. Julian was constantly seen prostrate before the image of the deity, busying himself about the ceremony, performing the menial offices of cleansing the wood, and kindling the fire with his own breath, till the victim was ready for the imperial hands. The sacrifices were so frequent, that, had he returned victorious over the Parthians, it was said there would have been a dearth of cattle.³

¹ Julian acknowledges the reluctance to sacrifice in many parts. "Show me," he says to the philosopher Aristomenes, "a genuine Greek in Cappadocia." *Τέως γὰρ τοὺς μὲν οὐ βουλομένους, ὀλίγους δὲ τινας ἐθέλοντας μὲν, οὐκ εἰδότας δὲ θύειν, ὁρῶ.* — Epist. iv. p. 375.

² I do not believe the story of human sacrifices in Alexandria and Athens, Socrat. E. H. iii. 13.

³ "Innumeros sine parsimoniâ mactans; ut crederetur, si revertisset de Parthis," boves jam defecturos. — Amm. Marc. xxv. 4.

THE
HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY,

FROM THE
BIRTH OF CHRIST TO THE ABOLITION OF PAGANISM
IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

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HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

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CHAPTER VI.—*Continued.*

Julian.

INSTEAD of the Christian hierarchy, Julian hastened to environ himself with the most distinguished of the Heathen philosophers. Most of these, ^{Philosophers.} indeed, pretended to be a kind of priesthood. Intercessors between the deities and the world of man, they wrought miracles, foresaw future events; they possessed the art of purifying the soul, so that it should be re-united to the Primal Spirit: the Divinity dwelt within them.

The obscurity of the names which Julian thus set up to rival in popular estimation an Athanasius or a Gregory of Nazianzum, is not altogether to be ascribed to the final success of Christianity. The impartial verdict of posterity can scarcely award to these men a higher appellation than that of sophists and rhetoricians. The subtlety and ingenuity of these more imaginative, perhaps, but far less profound, *schoolmen* of Paganism, were wasted on idle reveries, on solemn trifling, and questions which it was alike useless to agitate and impossible to solve. The hand of death

was alike upon the religion, the philosophy, the eloquence, of Greece; and the temporary movement which Julian excited was but a feeble quivering, a last impotent struggle, preparatory to total dissolution. Maximus appears, in his own time, to have been the most eminent of his class. The writings of Libanius and of Iamblichus alone survive, to any extent, the general wreck of the later Grecian literature. The genius and the language of Plato were alike wanting in his degenerate disciples. Julian himself is perhaps the best, because the plainest and most perspicuous, writer of his time; and the "Cæsars" may rank as no unsuccessful attempt at satiric irony.

Maximus was the most famous of the school. He had been among the early instructors of Julian. The emperor had scarcely assumed the throne, when he wrote to Maximus in the most urgent and flattering terms: life was not life without him.¹ Maximus obeyed the summons. On his journey through Asia Minor, the cities vied with each other in doing honor to the champion of Paganism. When the emperor heard of his arrival in Constantinople, though engaged in an important public ceremonial, he broke it off at once, and hastened to welcome his philosophic guest. The roads to the metropolis were crowded with sophists, hurrying to bask in the sunshine of imperial favor.² The privilege of travelling at the public cost by the posting establishment of the empire, so much abused by Constantius in favor of the bishops, was now conceded to some of the philosophers. Chry-

¹ Epist. xv. The nameless person to whom the first epistle is addressed is declared superior to Pythagoras or Plato. — Epist. i. p. 372.

² The severe and grave Priscus despised the youths who embraced philosophy as a fashion. Κορυβαντιώντων ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ μερακίων. — Vit. Prisc. apud Eunap., Ed. Boisson. p. 67.

santhius, another sophist of great reputation, was more modest and more prudent; he declined the dazzling honor, and preferred the philosophic quiet of his native town. Julian appointed him, with his wife, to the high-priesthood of Lydia; and Chrysanthius, with the prophetic discernment of worldly wisdom, kept on amicable terms with the Christians. Of Libanius, Julian writes in rapturous admiration. Iamblichus had united all that was excellent in the ancient philosophy and poetry; Pindar, Democritus, and Orpheus, were blended in his perfect and harmonious syncretism.¹ The wisdom of Iamblichus so much dazzled and overawed the emperor that he dared not intrude too much of his correspondence on the awful sage. "One of his letters surpassed in value all the gold of Lydia." The influence of men over their own age may in general be estimated by the language of contemporary writers. The admiration they excite is the test of their power, at least with their own party. The idolatry of the philosophers is confined to the few initiate; and even with their own party, the philosophers disappointed the high expectations which they had excited of their dignified superiority to the baser interests and weaknesses of mankind. They were by no means proof against the intoxication of court favor; they betrayed their vanity, their love of pleasure. Maximus himself is accused of assuming the pomp and insolence of a favorite; the discarded eunuchs had been replaced, it was feared, by a new, not less intriguing or more disinterested, race of courtiers.

To the Christians, Julian assumed the language of the most liberal toleration. His favorite orator thus described his policy: "He thought that neither fire

¹ Epist. xv.

nor sword could change the faith of mankind: the heart disowns the hand which is compelled by terror to sacrifice. Persecutions only make hypocrites who are unbelievers throughout life, or martyrs honored after death.”¹ He strictly prohibited the putting to death the Galileans (his favorite appellation of the Christians), as worthy rather of compassion than of hatred.² “Leave them to punish themselves, poor, blind, and misguided beings, who abandon the most glorious privilege of mankind, the adoration of the immortal gods, to worship the mouldering remains and bones of the dead.”³ He did not perceive that it was now too late to re-assume the old Roman contempt for the obscure and foreign religion. Christianity had sat on the throne; and disdain now sounded like mortified pride. And the language, even the edicts, of the emperor, under the smooth mask of gentleness and pity, betrayed the bitterness of hostility. His conduct was a perpetual sarcasm. It was the interest of Paganism to inflame, rather than to allay, the internal feuds of Christianity. Julian revoked the sentence of banishment pronounced against Arians, Apollinarians, and Donatists. He determined, it is said, to expose them to a sort of public exhibition of intellectual gladiatorship. He summoned the advocates of the several sects to dispute in his presence, and presided with mock solemnity over their debates. His own voice was drowned in the clamor, till at length, as though to

¹ Liban. Orat. Parent. v. i. p. 562.

² He asserts, in his 7th epistle, that he is willing neither to put to death nor to injure the Christians in any manner; but the worshippers of the gods were on all occasions to be preferred, — *προτιμᾶσθαι*. Compare Epist. lii.

³ His usual phrase was, “worshippers of the dead, and of the bones of men”

contrast them, to their disadvantage, with the wild barbarian warriors with whom he had been engaged, — “Hear me,” exclaimed the emperor: “the Franks and the Alemanni have heard me.” “No wild beasts,” he said, “are so savage and intractable as Christian sectaries.” He even endured personal insult. The statue of the “Fortune of Constantinople,” bearing a cross in its hand, had been set up by Constantine. Julian took away the cross, and removed the deity into a splendid temple. While he was employed in sacrifice, he was interrupted by the remonstrances of Maris, the Arian Bishop of Chalcedon, to whom age and blindness had added courage. “Peace!” said the emperor; “blind old man, thy Galilean God will not restore thine eyesight.” “I thank my God,” answered Maris, “for my blindness, which spares me the pain of beholding an apostate like thee.” Julian calmly proceeded in his sacrifice.¹

The sagacity of Julian perceived the advantage to be obtained by contrasting the wealth, the power, and the lofty tone of the existing priesthood with the humility of the primitive Christians. On the occasion of a dispute between the Arian and orthodox party in Edessa, he confiscated their wealth, in order, as he said, to reduce them to their becoming and boasted poverty. “Wealth, according to their admirable law,” he ironically says, “prevents them from attaining the kingdom of heaven.”²

Taunts their
professions
of poverty.

But his hostility was not confined to these indirect and invidious measures, or to quiet or insulting scorn. He began by abrogating all the exclusive privileges of the clergy; their immunity from taxation, and exemptions from public duties.

Privileges
withdrawn.

¹ Socrates, iii. 12. ² Socrates, iii. 13.

He would not allow Christians to be prefects, as their law prohibited their adjudging capital punishments. He resumed all the grants made on the revenues of the municipalities, and the supplies of corn for their maintenance. It was an act of more unwarrantable

Exclusion
from public
education.

yet politic tyranny to exclude them altogether from the public education. By a familiarity with the great models of antiquity, the Christian had risen at least to the level of the most correct and elegant of the Heathen writers of the day. Though something of Oriental expression, from the continual adoption of language or of imagery from the Sacred Writings, adhered to their style, yet even that gives a kind of raciness and originality to their language, which, however foreign to the purity of Attic Greek, is more animating and attractive than the prolix and languid periods of Libanius, or the vague metaphysics of Iamblichus. Julian perceived the danger, and represented this usurpation, as it were, of the arms of Paganism, and their employment against their legitimate parent. It is not, indeed, quite clear how far, or in what manner, the prohibition of Julian affected the

Education of
the higher
classes.

Christians. A general system of education, for the free and superior classes, had gradually spread through the empire.¹ Each city maintained a certain number of professors, according to its size and population, who taught grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy. They were appointed by the magistracy, and partly paid from the municipal funds. Vespasian first assigned stipends to professors in Rome, the Antonines extended the establishment to the other cities of the empire. They received two kinds of emoluments,

¹ There is an essay on the professors and general system of education, by Monsieur Naudet, *Mém. de l'Institut*, vol. x. p. 399.

the salary from the city, and a small fixed gratuity from their scholars. They enjoyed considerable immunities, exemption from military and civil service, and from all ordinary taxation. There can be no doubt that this education, as originally designed, was more or less intimately allied with the ancient religion. The grammarians, the poets,¹ the orators, the philosophers, of Greece and Rome, were the writers whose works were explained and instilled into the youthful mind. "The vital principle, Julian asserted, in the writings of Homer, Hesiod, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates, Lysias, was the worship of the gods. Some of these writers had dedicated themselves to Mercury, some to the Muses. Mercury and the Muses were the tutelar deities of the Pagan schools." The Christians had glided imperceptibly into some of these offices, and perhaps some of the professors had embraced Christianity. But Julian declared that the Christians must be shameful hypocrites, or the most sordid of men, who, for a few drachms, would teach what they did not believe.² The emperor might, with some plausibility, have insisted that the ministers of public instruction paid by the state, or from public funds, should at least not be hostile to the religion of the state. If the prohibition extended no farther than their exclusion from the public professorships, the measure might have worn some appearance of equity; but it was the avowed policy of Julian to exclude them, if possible, from all advantages derived from the liberal

¹ Homer, then considered, if not the parent, the great authority for the Pagan mythology, was the elementary schoolbook.

² When Christianity resumed the ascendancy, this act of intolerance was adduced in justification of the severities of Theodosius against Paganism. "Petunt etiam, ut illis privilegia deferat, qui loquendi et docendi nostris communem usum Juliani lege proximâ denegarunt." — Ambros., *Epist. R. 3p. ad Symmach.*

study of Greek letters. The original edict disclaimed the intention of compelling the Christians to attend the Pagan schools; but it contemptuously asserted the right of the government to control men so completely out of their senses, and, at the same time, affected condescension to their weakness and obstinacy.¹ But, if the emperor did not compel them to learn, he forbade them to teach. The interdict, no doubt, extended to their own private and separate schools for Hellenic learning. They were not to instruct in Greek letters without the sanction of the municipal magistracy. He added insult to this narrow prohibition: he taunted them with their former avowed contempt for human learning; he would not permit them to lay their profane hands on Homer and Plato. "Let them be content to explain Matthew and Luke in the churches of the Galileans."² Some of the Christian professors obeyed the imperial edict.³ Proæresius, who taught rhetoric with great success at Rome, calmly declined the overtures of the emperor, and retired into a private station. Musonius, a rival of the great Proæresius, was silenced. But they resorted to an expedient which shows that they had full freedom of Christian instruction. A Christian Homer, a Christian Pindar, and other works, were composed, in which Christian sentiments and opinions were interwoven into the language of the original poets. The piety of the age greatly admired these Christian parodies, which, how-

¹ Julian. Epist. xlii. p. 420. Socrates, v. 18. Theodoret, iii. 8. Sozomen, v. 18. Greg. Naz. Or. iii. p. 51, 96, 97.

² Julian. Epist. xlv.

³ The more liberal Heathens were disgusted and ashamed at this measure of Julian. "Illud autem erat inclemens obruendum perenni silentio, quod arcebat docere magistros, rhetoricos, et grammaticos, ritûs Christiani cultores." — Amm. Marcell. xx. c. 10.

ever, do not seem to have maintained their ground even in the Christian schools.¹

Julian is charged with employing unworthy or insidious arts to extort an involuntary assent to Paganism. Heathen symbols everywhere replaced those of Christianity. The medals display a great variety of deities, with their attributes. Jupiter is crowning the emperor; Mars and Mercury inspire him with military skill and eloquence. The monogram of Christ disappeared from the Labarum, and on the standards were represented the gods of Paganism. As the troops defiled before the emperor, each man was ordered to throw a few grains of frank incense upon an altar which stood before him. The Christians were horror-stricken, when they found that, instead of an act of legitimate respect to the emperor, they had been betrayed into paying homage to idols. Some bitterly lamented their involuntary sacrilege, and indignantly threw down their arms; some of them are said to have surrounded the palace, and, loudly avowing that they were Christians, reproached the emperor with his treachery, and cast down the largess that they had received. For this breach of discipline and insult to the emperor, they were led out to military execution. They vied with each other, it is said, for the honors of martyrdom.² But the bloody scene was interrupted by a messenger from the emperor, who contented himself with expelling them from the army, and sending them into banishment.

¹ After the death of Julian, they were contemptuously thrown aside by the Christians themselves. *Τῶν δὲ οἱ πόντοι ἐν τῷ Ἰσφ μὴ γραφεῖναι λογιζομενται.* — Socrates, E. H. iii. 16.

² Jovian, Valentinian, and Valens, the future emperors, are said to have been among those who refused to serve in the army. Julian, however, declined to accept the resignation of the former.

Actual persecutions, though unauthorized by the imperial edicts, would take place in some parts from the collision of the two parties. The Pagans, now invested in authority, would not always be disposed to use that authority with discretion; and the Pagan populace would seize the opportunity of revenging the violation of their temples, or the interruption of their rites, by the more zealous Christians. No doubt the language of an address delivered to Constantius and Constans had expressed the sentiments of a large party among the Christians. "Destroy without fear, destroy ye, most religious emperors, the ornaments of the temples. Coin the idols into money, or melt them into useful metal. Confiscate all their endowments for the advantage of the emperor and of the government. God has sanctioned, by your recent victories, your hostility to the temples." The writer proceeds to thunder out the passages of the Mosaic law, which enforce the duty of the extirpation of idolaters.¹ No doubt, in many places, the eager fanaticism of the Christians had outstripped the tardy movements of imperial zeal. In many cases, it would now be thought an act of religion to reject—in others, it would be impossible to satisfy—the demands for restitution. The best-authenticated acts of direct persecution relate to these disputes. Nor can Julian himself be exculpated from the guilt, if not of conniving at, of faintly rebuking, these tumultuous acts of revenge or of wanton outrage. In some of the Syrian towns,—Gaza, Hierapolis, and Cæsarea,—the Pagans had perpetrated cruelties too horrible to detail. Not content with massacring the Christians with every kind of indignity,

¹ Julius Firmicus Maternus, *De Errore Profanorum Religionum*, c. 29.

they had treated their lifeless remains with unprecedented outrage. They sprinkled the entrails of their victims with barley, that the fowls might be tempted to devour them. At Heliopolis, their cannibal fury did not shrink from tasting the blood and the inward parts of murdered priests and virgins. Julian calmly expresses his regret that the restorers of the temples of the gods have in some instances exceeded his expressed intentions; which, however, seem to have authorized the destruction of the Christian churches, or at least some of their sacred places.¹

Restoration
of temples.

Julian made an inauspicious choice in the battlefield on which he attempted to decide his conflict with Christianity. Christianity predominated to a greater extent in Constantinople and in Antioch than in any other cities of the empire. In Rome, he might have appealed to the antiquity of Heathenism, and its eternal association with the glories of the republic. In Athens, he would have combined in more amicable confederacy the philosophy and the religion. In Athens, his accession had given a considerable impulse to Paganism; the temples, with the rest of the public buildings, had renewed their youth.² Eleusis, which had fallen into ruin, now re-assumed its splendor, and

Julian contends on
ill-chosen
ground.

¹ Greg. Nazianz. Socrates, iii. 14. Sozomen, v. 9. Compare Gibbon, vol. iv. p. 116, who has referred the following passage in the Misopogon to these scenes.

Οἱ τὰ μὲν τῶν θεῶν ἀνέστησαν αὐτίκα τεμένη· τοὺς τάφους δὲ τῶν ἀθέων ἀνέτρεψαν πάντας ὑπὸ τοῦ συνθήματος, ὃ δὴ δέδοται παρ' ἐμοῦ πρῶην, οὕτως ἐπάρθεντες τὸν νοῦν, καὶ μετέωροι γεγόμενοι τὴν διανοίαν, ὥς καὶ πλέον ἐπεξελθεῖν τοῖς εἰς τοὺς θεοὺς πλημμελοῦσιν ἢ βουλωμένωσιν ἦν. — Misopogon, p. 361.

Did he mean by the *τάφοι* chapels, like those built over the remains of St. Babylas, in the Daphne, at Antioch, or the churches in general?

² Mamertinus, probably, highly paints the ruin, that he may exalt the re-

might have been wisely made the centre of his new system. But in Constantinople all was modern and Christian. Piety to the imperial founder was closely connected with devotion to his religion. Julian could only restore the fanes of the tutelary gods of old Byzantium; he could strip the Fortune of the city of her Christian attributes; but he could not give a Pagan character to a city which had grown up under Christian auspices. Constantinople remained contumaciously and uniformly Christian. Antioch had been a chief seat of that mingled Oriental and Grecian worship of the Sun which had grown up in all the Hellenized parts of Asia; the name of Daphne given to the sacred grove, implied that the fictions of Greece had been domiciliated in Syria.

Antioch was now divided by two incongruous but equally dominant passions, — devotion to Christianity, and attachment to the games, the theatre, and every kind of public amusement. The bitter sarcasms of Julian on the latter subject are justified and confirmed by the grave and serious admonitions of Chrysostom. By a singular coincidence, Antioch came into collision with the strongest prejudices of Julian. His very virtues were fatal to his success in the re-establishment of Paganism; its connection with the amusements of the people Julian repudiated with philosophic disdain. Instead of attempting to purify the degenerate taste, he had all the austerity of a Pagan monk. Public exhibitions were interdicted to his reformed priesthood; once, at the beginning of the year, the emperor entered the theatre, remained in undisguised wear-

stor. *"Ipsæ illæ bonarum artium magistræ et inventrices Athenæ omnem cultum publicè privatimque perdiderant. In miserandam ruinam conciderat Eleusinia."* — Mamert. Grat. Actio. ix. p. 147.

ness, and withdrew in disgust. He was equally impatient of wasting his time as a spectator of the chariot race; he attended occasionally, out of respect to the presiding deity of the games; saw five or six courses, and retired.¹ Yet Paganism might appear to welcome Julian to Antioch. It had still many followers, who clung with fond attachment to its pomps and gay processions. The whole city poured forth to receive him; by some he was hailed as a deity. It happened to be the Festival of Adonis; and the loud shouts of welcome to the emperor were mingled with the wild and shrill cries of the women, wailing that Syrian symbol of the universal deity, the Sun. It might seem an awful omen that the rites which mourned the departure of the genial deity should welcome his ardent worshipper.² The outward appearance of religion must have affected Julian with alternate hope and disappointment. From all quarters, diviners, augurs, magicians, enchanters, the priests of Cybele and of the other Eastern religions, flocked to Antioch. His palace was crowded with men whom Chrysostom describes as branded with every crime, as infamous for poisonings and witchcrafts. "Men who had grown old in prisons and in the mines, and who maintained their wretched existence by the most disgraceful trades, were suddenly advanced to places of dignity, and invested with the priesthood and sacrificial functions."³ The severe Julian, as he passed through the city, "was encircled by the profligate of every age, and by prostitutes with their wanton laughter and shameless language."

¹ Misopogon, p. 339, 340. Amm. xxii. 9.

² "Evenerat iisdem diebus annuo cursu completo Adonica ritu veteri celebrari." — Amm. Marc. xxii. 9.

³ Chrysostom contra Gent.

Among the former, the ardent, youthful, and ascetic preacher probably included all the Theurgists of the philosophic school ; the latter sentence describes the festal processions, which no doubt retained much of their old voluptuous character. Julian ascended the lofty
Temple on
Mount
Casius.
top of Mount Casius, to solemnize, under the
The Daphne.
broad and all-embracing cope of heaven, the rites of Jupiter Philius.¹ But in the luxurious groves of Daphne, he was doomed to a melancholy disappointment. The grove remained with all its beautiful scenery, its shady recesses, its cool and transparent streams, in which the Heathen inhabitants of Antioch had mingled their religious rites with their private enjoyments. But a serious gloom, a solemn quiet, pervaded the whole place. The temple of Apollo, the magnificent edifice in which the devotion of former ages had sacrificed hecatombs, where the clouds of incense had soared above the grove, and in which the pomp of Oriental worship had assembled half Syria, was silent and deserted. He expected (in his own words²) a magnificent procession, victims, libations, dances, incense, boys with white and graceful vests and with minds as pure and unspotted, dedicated to the service of the god. He entered the temple ; he found a solitary priest, with a single goose for sacrifice. The indignant emperor poured out his resentment in the bitterest language ; he reproached the impiety, the shameful parsimony, of the inhabitants, who enjoyed the large estates attached to the temple, and thus neglected its services ; who at the same time permitted their wives to

¹ The Jupiter Philius, or Casius. This god was the tutelary deity of Antioch, and appears on the medals of the city. — St. Martin, note to *Le Beau* iii. 6.

² *Misopogon*, 362.

lavish their treasures on the infamous Galileans, and on their scandalous banquets, called the Maiuma.

Julian determined to restore the majesty of the temple and worship of Apollo. But it was first necessary to dispossess the Christian usurper of the sacred place. The remains of Babylas, the Remains of Babylas martyred Bishop of Antioch, who had suffered, probably in the Decian persecution, had been removed eleven years before to Daphne; and the Christians crowded to pay their devotions near his tomb. The Christians assert, that the baffled Apollo confessed himself abashed in the presence of the saint; his oracle dared not break silence.¹ At all events, Julian determined to purify the grove from the contamination of this worship. The remains of Babylas were ordered to be transported back to Antioch. They were met by a solemn procession of a great part of the inhabitants. The relics were raised on a chariot, and conducted in triumph, with the excited multitude dancing before it, and thundering out the maledictory psalm: "Confounded be all they that worship carved images, and delight in vain idols." Julian attempted to punish this outburst of popular feeling. But the firmness of the first victim who endured the torture, and the remonstrances of the prefect Sallust, brought him back to his better temper of mind. The restoration of the temple was urged on with zealous haste. A splendid peristyle arose around it; when, at midnight, Julian received the Fire in the temple. intelligence that the temple was on fire. The roof and all the ornaments were entirely consumed, and the statue of the god himself, of gilded wood, yet of such astonishing workmanship that it is

¹ Chrysostom, Orat. in S. Babylam.

said to have enforced the homage of the conquering Sapor, was burned to ashes. The Christians beheld the manifest wrath of Heaven, and asserted that the lightning had come down and smitten the idolatrous edifice. Julian ascribed the conflagration to the malice of the Christians. The most probable account is, that a devout worshipper had lighted a number of torches before an image of the Queen of Heaven, which had set fire to some part of the building. Julian exacted, as it were, reprisals on Christianity; he ordered the cathedral of Antioch to be closed. His orders were executed with insult to the sacred place, and the spoliation of the sacred vessels.¹

Julian, in the mean time, was not regardless of the advancement of the Pagan interest in other parts of the empire. Alexandria could not be at peace while any kind of religious excitement inflamed the minds of men. The character of George, the Arian Bishop of Alexandria, is loaded by Heathen as well as by Christian writers with every kind of obloquy. His low birth, the base and sordid occupations of his youth, his servile and intriguing meanness in manhood, his tyranny in power, trace, as it were, his whole life with increasing odiousness. Yet, extraordinary as it may seem, the Arian party could find no man of better reputation to fill this important post; and George, the impartial tyrant of all parties, perished at last, the victim of his zealous hostility to Paganism. A chief cause of the unpopularity of George was the assertion of the imperial right over the fee-simple of the land on which Alexandria was built. This right was gravely deduced from Alexander the Great. During the reign of Con-

Alexandria.

George,
Arian Bishop
of Alex-
andria.

¹ Amm. Marc. xxii. 13. Theodor. iii. 11. Sozomen, v. 20.

stantius, George had seized every opportunity of depressing and insulting Paganism: he had interdicted the festivals and the sacrifices of the Heathen; he had pillaged the gifts, the statues, and ornaments of their temple; he had been heard, as he passed the temple either of Serapis himself, or of the Fortune of the city, to utter the contemptuous expression, "How long will this sepulchre be permitted to stand?"¹ He had discovered a cave where the Mithriac mysteries were said to have been carried on with a horrible sacrifice of human life. The heads of a number of youths were exposed (probably disinterred from some old cemetery near which these rites had been established), as of the victims of this sanguinary idolatry. The insults and outrages rankled in the hearts of the Pagans. The fate of Artemius, the Duke of Egypt, the friend and abettor of George in all his tyrannical proceedings, prepared the way for that of George. Artemius was suspected of being concerned in the death of Gallus. He was charged with enormous delinquencies by the people of Alexandria. Whether as a retribution for the former offence against the brother of Julian, or as the penalty for his abuse of his authority in his government, Artemius was condemned to death. The intelligence of his execution was the signal for a general insurrection of the Pagans in Alexandria. The palace of George was invested by a frantic mob. In an instant he was dragged forth, murdered, trampled under foot, dragged along the streets, and at length torn limb from limb. With him perished two officers of the empire, Dracontius, master of the mint, and the count Diodorus; the one accused of having

His death.

¹ Amm. Marcell. xxii. 11. Socrates, iii. 2.

destroyed an altar of Serapis, the other of having built a church. The mangled remains of these miserable men were paraded through the streets on the back of a camel, and at length, lest they should be enshrined and worshipped as the relics of martyrs, cast into the sea. The Christians, however, of all parties, appear to have looked with unconcern on the fate of this episcopal tyrant,¹ whom the general hatred, if it did not excite them to assist in his massacre, prevented them from attempting to defend. Julian addressed a letter to the people of Alexandria. While he admitted, in the strongest terms, the guilt of George, he severely rebuked their violence and presumption in thus taking the law into their own hands, and the horrible inhumanity of tearing like dogs the bodies of men in pieces, and then presuming to lift up their blood-stained hands to the gods. He admitted that their indignation for their outraged temples and insulted gods might naturally madden them to just resentment; but they should have awaited the calm and deliberate course of justice, which would have exacted due punishment from the offender. Julian secured to himself part of the spoils of the murdered prelate. George had a splendid library, rich not merely in the writings of the Galileans, but, what Julian esteemed as infinitely more precious, the works of the Greek orators and philosophers. The first he would willingly have destroyed: the latter he commanded to be carefully reserved for his own use.²

In the place of George arose a more powerful adversary. Julian knew and dreaded the character of

¹ "Poterantque miserandi homines ad crudele supplicium devoti, Christianorum adjumento defendi, ni Georgii odio omnes indiscretè flagrabant."—*Amm. Marcell.* xxii. 11.

Julian. Epist. ix. & 1

Athanasius, who, during these tumults, had quietly resumed his authority over the orthodox Christians of Alexandria. The general edict ^{Athanasius} of Julian for the recall of all exiles contained no exception; and Athanasius availed himself of its protecting authority.¹ Under his auspices, the Church, even in these disastrous times, resumed its vigor. The Arians, terrified perhaps by the hostility of the Pagans, hastened to re-unite themselves to the Church; and Julian heard with bitter indignation, that some Pagan females had received baptism from Athanasius. Julian expressed his astonishment, not that Athanasius had returned from exile, but that he had dared to resume his see. He ordered him into instant banishment. He appealed, in a letter to the prefect, to the mighty Serapis, that if Athanasius, the enemy of the gods, was not expelled from the city before the calends of December, he should impose a heavy fine. "By his influence the gods were brought into contempt; it would be better, therefore, that 'this most wicked Athanasius' were altogether banished from Egypt." To a supplication from the Christian inhabitants of the city in favor of Athanasius, he returned a sarcastic and contemptuous reply, reminding the people of Alexandria of their descent from Pagan ancestors, and of the greatness of the gods they worshipped, and expressing his astonishment that they should prefer the worship of Jesus, the Word of God, to that of the Sun, the glorious and visible and eternal emblem of the Deity.²

In other parts, justified perhaps in their former excesses, or encouraged to future acts of violence, by the impunity of the Alexandrians, Paganism awoke, if not

¹ Julian. Epist. xxvi. p. 398.

² Julian. Epist. xi. p. 378.

to make reprisals by conversion, at least to take a bloody revenge on its Christian adversaries.¹ The atrocious persecutions of the fanatic populace, in some of the cities of Syria, have already been noticed. The aged Mark of Arethusa was, if not the most blameless, at least the victim of these cruelties, whose life ought to have been sanctified even by the rumor which ascribed the preservation of Julian, when an infant, to the pious bishop. Mark was accused of having destroyed a temple; he was summoned to rebuild it at his own expense. But Mark, with the virtues, inherited the primitive poverty of the apostles; and, even if he had had the power, no doubt, would have resisted this demand.² But the furious populace (according to Sozomen, men, women, and schoolboys) seized on the old man, and inflicted every torment which their inventive barbarity could suggest. The patience and calm temperament of the old man resisted and survived the cruelties.³ Julian is said to have expressed no indignation, and ordered no punishment. The prefect Sallust reminded him of the disgrace to which Paganism was exposed, by being thus put to shame by a feeble old man.

The policy of Julian induced him to seek out every alliance which could strengthen the cause of Paganism against Christianity. Polytheism courted an unnatural union with Judaism; their bond of connection was their common hatred to Christianity. It is not clear whether Julian was sufficiently ac-

Julian courts
the Jews.

¹ Julian, Epist. x. p. 377.

² According to Theodoret, 'Ο δὲ, ἴσον εἰς ἄσεβειαν ἔφη, τὸ ὀβολὸν γούν
ἔνα δοῦναι, τῷ πάντα δοῦναι. — E. H. iii. 7.

³ Sozomen gives the most detailed account of this cruel scene, clearly a
popular tumult, which the authorities in no way interfered to repress. — E. H.
v. 10.

quainted with the writings of the Christians, distinctly to apprehend that they considered the final destruction of the Jewish temple to be one of the great prophecies on which their religion rested. The rebuilding of that temple was bringing, as it were, this question to direct issue; it was an appeal to God, whether he had or had not finally rejected the people of Israel, and admitted the Christians to all their great and exclusive privileges. At all events, the elevation of Judaism was the depression of Christianity. It set the Old Testament, to which the Christians appealed, in direct and hostile opposition to the New.

The profound interest awakened in the Jewish mind showed that the race of Israel embraced, with eager fervor, this solemn appeal to Heaven. With the joy which animated the Jew, at this unexpected summons to return to his native land and to rebuild his fallen temple, mingled, no doubt, some natural feeling of triumph and of gratified animosity over the Christian. In every part of the empire the Jews awoke from their slumber of abasement and of despondency. It was not for them to repudiate the overtures of Paganism. The emperor acknowledged their God by the permission to build again the temple to his glory; and, if not as the sole and supreme God, yet Julian's language affected a monotheistic tone: and they might indulge the fond hope that the re-establishment of the temple upon Mount Moriah might be preparatory to the final triumph of their faith, in the awe-struck veneration of the whole world; the commencement of the Messiah's kingdom; the dawn of their long-delayed, but at length approaching millennium of empire and of religious supremacy. Those who could not contribute their personal labor

Determines
to rebuild
the temple
at Jerusalem.

devoted their wealth to the national work. The extent of their sacrifices, the eagerness of their hopes, rather belong to the province of Jewish history. But every precaution was taken to secure the uninterrupted progress of the work. It was not an affair of the Jewish nation, but of the imperial government. It was intrusted to the ruler of the province, as the delegate of the emperor. Funds were advanced from the public treasury: and if the Jews themselves, of each sex and of every age, took pride in hallowing their own hands by assisting in heaping up the holy earth, or hewing the stone to be employed in this sacred design; if they wrought their wealth into tools of the precious metals, shovels and spades of silver, which were to become valued heirlooms as consecrated by this pious service,—the emperor seemed to take a deep personal interest in the design, which was at once to immortalize his magnificence, and to assist his other glorious undertakings. The Jews, who acknowledged that it was not lawful to offer sacrifice except on that holy place, were to propitiate their God, during his expedition into Persia; and, on his triumphant return from that region, he promised to unite with them in adoration in the restored city and in the reconstructed fane of the great God of the Jews.¹

Judaism and Paganism had joined in this solemn
 Interrupted. adjuration, as it were, of the Deity. Their
 vows were met with discomfiture and disappointment. The simple fact of the interruption of their labors, by an event which the mass of mankind could not but consider preternatural, even as recorded by the Pagan historians, appeared, in the more excited

¹ In his letter to the Jews, he calls the God of the Jews, *κρείττων*; in his Theologic Fragment (p. 295), *μέγας Θεός*

and imaginative minds of the Christians, a miracle of the most terrific and appalling nature. Few, if any, of the Christians could have been eye-witnesses of the scene. The Christian world would have averted its face in horror from the impious design. The relation must, in the first instance, have come from the fears of the discomfited and affrighted workmen. The main fact is indisputable, that, as they dug down to the foundations, terrific explosions took place; what seemed balls of fire burst forth; the works were shattered to pieces; clouds of smoke and dust enveloped the whole in darkness, broke only by the wild and fitful glare of the flames. Again the work was renewed by the obstinate zeal of the Jews; again they were repelled by this unseen and irresistible power, till they cast away their implements, and abandoned the work in humiliation and despair. How far natural causes — the ignition of the foul vapors, confined in the deeply excavated recesses of the hill of the temple, according to the recent theory — will account for the facts, as they are related in the simpler narrative of Marcellinus, may admit of some question; but the philosophy of the age, whether Heathen or Christian, was as unable as it was unwilling to trace such appalling events to the unvarying operations of nature.¹

¹ See M. Guizot's note on Gibbon, with my additional observations. There seems a strong distinction in point of credibility between miracles addressed to the terror and those which appeal to the calmer emotions of the mind, such as most of those recorded in the Gospel. The former, in the first place, are usually momentary, or, if prolonged, endure but a short time. But the passion of fear so completely unhinges and disorders the mind, as to deprive it of all trustworthy power of observation or discrimination. In themselves, therefore, I should venture to conclude that terrific miracles, resting on human testimony, are less credible than those of a less appalling nature. Though the other class of emotions, those of joy or gratitude, or religious veneration, likewise disturb the equable and dispassionate state of mind requisite for cool reasoning, yet such miracles are in general both more calmly surveyed, and more permanent in their effects.

Christianity may have embellished this wonderful event, but Judaism and Paganism confessed by their terrors the prostration of their hopes. The work was abandoned; and the Christians of later ages could appeal to the remains of the shattered works and unfinished excavations, as the unanswerable sign of the divine wrath against their adversaries, as the public and miraculous declaration of God in favor of their insulted religion.

But it was not as emperor alone that the indefatigable Julian labored to overthrow the Christian religion. It was not by the public edict, the more partial favor shown to the adherents of Paganism, the insidious disparagement of Christianity by the depression of its ministers and apostles, and the earnest elevation of Heathenism to a moral code and an harmonious religion, with all the pomp of a sumptuous ritual; it was not in the council, or the camp, or the temple alone, that Julian stood forth as the avowed antagonist of Christianity.

Writings of Julian. He was ambitious, as a writer, of confuting its principles and disproving its veracity: he passed in his closet the long nights of the winter, and continued, during his Persian campaign, his elaborate work against the faith of Christ. He seemed, as it were, possessed with an equal hatred of those whom he considered the two most dangerous enemies of the Roman empire,—the Persians and the Christians. While oppressed by all the serious cares of organizing and moving such an army as might bring back the glorious days of Germanicus or of Trajan; while his ambition contemplated nothing less than the permanent humiliation of the great Eastern rival of the empire,—his literary vanity found time for its exercise: and, in all his visions of military glory and conquest,

Julian never lost sight of his fame as an author.¹ It is difficult to judge from the fragments of this work, selected for confutation after his death Work against Christianity. by Cyril of Alexandria, of the power, or even of the candor, shown by the imperial controversialist. But it appears to have been composed in a purely polemic spirit; with no lofty or comprehensive views of the real nature of the Christian religion, no fine and philosophic perception of that which in the new faith had so powerfully and irresistibly occupied the whole soul of man; with no consciousness of the utter inefficiency of the cold and incoherent Pagan mysticism, which he endeavored to substitute for the Gospel.

But, at least, this was a grave and serious employment. Whatever might be thought of his success as a religious disputant, there was no loss of dignity in the emperor condescending to enlighten his subjects on such momentous questions. But, when he stooped to be the satirist of the inhabitants Misopogon. of a city which had ridiculed his philosophy and rejected his religion, the finest and most elegant irony, the keenest and most delicate wit, would scarcely have justified this compromise of the imperial majesty. But in the *Misopogon* — the apology for his philosophic beard — Julian mingled the coarseness of the Cynic with the bitterness of personal indignity. The vulgar ostentation of his own filthiness, the description of the vermin which peopled his thick beard, ill accord with the philosophic superiority with which Julian rallies the love of amusement and gayety among his subjects of Antioch. Their follies were at least more graceful and humane than this rude pedantry. There

¹ "Julianus Augustus septem libros in expeditione Parthica adversus Christum evomuit." — Hieronym. Oper. Epist. lxx.

is certainly much felicity of sarcasm, doubtless much justice, in his animadversions on the dissolute manners of the Antiochenes, their ingratitude for his liberality, their dislike of his severe justice, the insolence of their contempt for his ruder manners, throughout the Misopogon: but it lowers Julian from a follower of Plato, to a coarse imitator of Diogenes; it exhibits him as borrowing the worst part of the Christian monkish character, the disregard of the decencies and civilities of life, without the high and visionary enthusiasm, or the straining after superiority to the low cares and pursuits of the world. It was singular to hear a Grecian sophist, for such was undoubtedly the character of Julian's writings, extolling the barbarians, the Celts and Germans, above the polished inhabitants of Greece and Syria.

Paganism followed with faithful steps, and with eager hopes, the career of Julian on the brilliant outset of his Persian campaign. Some of the Syrian cities through which he passed, Batne and Hierapolis and Carrhæ, seemed to enter into his views, and endeavored, with incense and sacrifice, to propitiate the gods of Julian.¹ For the last time the Etruscan haruspices accompanied a Roman emperor; but, by a singular fatality, their adverse interpretation of the signs of heaven was disdained, and Julian followed the advice of the philosophers, who colored their predictions with the bright hues of the emperor's ambition.²

The death of Julian did greater honor to his philosophy. We may reject as in itself improbable, and as resting on insufficient authority, the

Julian sets forth on his Persian expedition.

Death of Julian.

¹ Julian. Epist. xxvii. p. 399. Amm. Marc. xxii. 2.

² Amm. Marc. xxiii. 5.

ofter sentence ascribed to him when he received his fatal wound. "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"¹ He comforted his weeping friends; he expressed his readiness to pay the debt of nature, and his joy that the purer and better part of his being was so soon to be released from the gross and material body. "The gods of heaven sometimes bestow an early death as the best reward of the most pious." His conscience uttered no reproach: he had administered the empire with moderation, firmness, and clemency; he had repressed the license of public manners; he had met danger with firmness. His prescient spirit had long informed him that he should fall by the sword. And he thanked the everlasting deity that he thus escaped the secret assassination, the slow and wasting disease, the ignominious death; and departed from the world in the midst of his glory and prosperity. "It is equal cowardice to seek death before our time, and to attempt to avoid it when our time is come." His calmness was only disturbed by the intelligence of the loss of a friend. He who despised his own death lamented that of another. He reproved the distress of his attendants, declaring that it was humiliating to mourn over a prince already reconciled to the heavens and to the stars; and thus, calmly discoursing with the philosophers Priscus and Maximus on the metaphysics of the soul, expired Julian, the philosopher and emperor.²

¹ Νενίκηκας, Γάλιλαε. — Theodoret, Hist. Eccl. iii. 25.

² Amm. Marc. *ibid.* Even the Christians, at a somewhat later period, did justice to the great qualities of Julian. The character drawn by the Pagan, Aurelius Victor, is adopted by Prudentius, who kindles into unusual vigor. "Cupido laudis immodicæ; cultus numinum superstitiosus: audax plus, quam imperatorem decet, cui salus propria cum semper ad securitatem omnium, maximè in bello, conservanda est." — Epit. p. 228.

Ductor fortissimus armis;

Conditor et legum celeberrimus; ore manuque

Julian died, perhaps happily for his fame. Perilous as his situation was, he might still have extricated himself by his military skill and courage, and eventually succeeded in his conflict with the Persian empire; he might have dictated terms to Sapor, far different from those which the awe of his name and the vigorous organization of his army, even after his death, extorted from the prudent Persian. But in his other, his internal conflict, Julian could have obtained no victory, even at the price of rivers of blood shed in persecution, and perhaps civil wars throughout the empire. He might have arrested the fall of the empire; but that of Paganism was beyond the power of man.¹ The invasion of arms may be resisted or repelled: the silent and profound encroachments of opinion and religious sentiment will not retrograde. Already there had been ominous indications that the temper of Julian would hardly maintain its more moderate policy; nor would Christianity in that age have been content with opposing him with passive courage. The insulting fanaticism of the violent, no less than the stubborn contumacy of the disobedient, would have goaded him by degrees to severer measures. The whole empire would have been rent by civil dissensions. The bold adventurer would scarcely have been wanting, who, either from ambition or enthusiasm, would have embraced the Christian cause; and the pacific spirit of genuine Christianity, its high notions of submission to civil authority, would scarcely, generally or con-

Probable
results of
Julian's con-
flict with
Christianity.

*Consultor patriæ, sed non consultor habendæ
Religionis; amans ter centum millia Divam;
Perfidus ille Deo, sed non et perfidus orbi.*

Apoth. 430.

¹ Julian's attempt to restore Paganism was like that of Rienzi to restore the liberties of Rome.

stantly, have resisted the temptation of resuming its seat upon the throne. Julian could not have subdued Christianity, without depopulating the empire; nor contested with it the sovereignty of the world, without danger to himself and to the civil authority; nor yielded, without the disgrace and bitterness of failure. He who stands across the peaceful stream of progressive opinion, by his resistance maddens it to an irresistible torrent, and is either swept away by it at once, or diverts it over the whole region in one devastating deluge.¹

¹ Theodoret describes the rejoicings at Antioch on the news of the death of Julian. There were not only festal dancings in the churches and cemeteries of the martyrs, but in the theatres they celebrated the triumph of the cross, and mocked at his vaticinations.

Ἡ δὲ Ἀντιόχου πόλις τὴν ἐκείνου μεμαθηκῖα σφαγὴν, δημοθουρίας ἐπέτελλει καὶ πανηγύρεις καὶ οὐ μόνον ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις ἐχόρευον καὶ τοῖς μαρτύρων σηκοῖς, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις τοῦ σταυροῦ τὴν νίκην ἐκήρυττον, καὶ τοῖς ἐκείνου μαντεύμασιν ἐπετώθων. — E. H. iii. 27.

CHAPTER VII.

Valentinian and Valens.

It is singular to hear the Pagans taking up, in their altered position, the arguments of the Christians. The extinction of the family of Constantine was a manifest indication of the divine displeasure at the abandonment of Paganism.¹ But this was the calmer conclusion of less recent sorrow and disappointment. The immediate expression of Pagan regret was a bitter and reproachful complaint against the ingratitude of the gods, who made so bad a return for the zealous services of Julian.

Lamentations of the Pagans at the death of Julian.

“Was this the reward for so many victims, so many prayers, so much incense, so much blood, shed on the altar by night as well as by day? Julian, in his profuse and indiscriminate piety, had neglected no deity; he had worshipped all *who* lived in the tradition of the poets, — fathers and children, gods and goddesses, superior and subordinate deities; and they, instead of hurling their thunderbolts and lightnings, and all the armory of heaven, against the hostile Persians, had thus basely abandoned their sacred charge. The new Salomoneus, the more impious Lycurgus, the senseless image of a man (such were the appellations with which the indignant rhetorician alluded to Constantius), who had waged implacable warfare with the

¹ Liban. pro Templis, ii. 184.

gods, quenched the sacred fires, trampled on the altars, closed or demolished or profaned the temples, or alienated them to loose companions, — this man had been permitted to pollute the earth for fifty years, and then departed by the ordinary course of nature ; while Julian, with all his piety and all his glory, had only given to the world a hasty glimpse of his greatness, and suddenly departed from their unsatisfied sight.”¹ On the other hand, the Christians raised a shout of undissembled triumph : Antioch was in a tumult of joy.² Gregory of Nazianzum poured forth from the pulpit his bitter eloquence on the head of the apostate.³ Christian legend is full of predictions of the death of Julian. The most striking is the answer attributed to a grammarian of Antioch, whom Libanius accosted with a sneer, “ What is the carpenter’s son doing now ? ” “ He is making a coffin.”⁴ But, without regarding the vain lamentations of Paganism, Christianity calmly resumed its ascendancy. The short reign of Jovian sufficed for its re-establishment ; and, as yet, it exacted no revenge for its sufferings and degradation under Julian.⁵ There may have been policy as well as moderation in the

Reign of
Jovian.

¹ Libanius insults, in this passage, the worship of the dead man, whose sarcophagus (he seems to allude to the *pix* or consecrated box in which the sacramental symbol of our Saviour’s body was enclœded) is introduced into the *κλῆρος* of the gods. — Monod. in Julian. i. p. 509.

² Theodoret, iii. 38. ³ Greg. Orat. iv. c. 124. ⁴ Theodoret, iii. 28.

⁵ Themistius praises highly the toleration of Jovian. “ Thy law, and that of God, is eternal and unchangeable ; that which leaves the soul of every man free to follow that form of religion which seems best to him.” — Ad Jovian. p. 81, ed. Dindorf. He proceeds to assert, that the general piety will be increased by the rivalry of different religions. “ The Deity does not demand uniformity of faith.” He touches on the evils which had arisen out of religious factions, and urges Jovian to permit supplications to ascend to heaven from all parts of the empire for his prosperous reign. He praises him, however, for suppressing magic and Goetic sacrifices.

toleration of Jovian. The empire had been first offered to the prefect Sallust, a Pagan. It was Procopius, probably another Pagan, who laid the diadem at the feet of Jovian. Sacrifices to the gods were still performed at Constantinople,¹ the entrails of victims were consulted by the haruspices on the fate of the army.² Yet during his eight months' reign Jovian had time to declare himself not only a Christian but an orthodox emperor.³ He received Athanasius, who had emerged from his concealment, with distinguished favor, and repelled the Arian bishop with scorn.⁴ The character of the two brothers who succeeded to the empire, Valentinian and Valens, and their religious policy, were widely at variance. Valentinian ascended the throne with the fame of having rejected the favor of Julian and the prospects of military distinction, for the sake of his religion. He had withdrawn from the army rather than offer even questionable adoration to standards decorated with the symbols of idolatry. But Valentinian was content to respect those rights of conscience which he had so courageously asserted.

The emperor of the West maintained a calm and uninterrupted toleration, which incurred the reproach of indifference from the Christian party, but has received the respectful homage of the Pagan historian.⁵ The immunities and the privileges of the Pagan priesthood were confirmed;⁶ the rites of

A.D. 364.
Toleration of
Valentinian.

¹ La Bleterie, Vie de Jovien, p. 118.

² Amm. Marcell. xxv. 6.

³ Julian died June 26, A.C. 363; Jovian. Feb. 17, A.C. 364.

⁴ Athanasius, ii. 622.

⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxx. c. 9.

⁶ "Testes sunt leges a me in exordio imperii mei datæ; quibus unicuique quod animo imbibisset, colendi libera facultas tributa est." — Cod. Theod. l. ix. tit. 16, l. 9.

⁶ Cod. Theod. xii. 1, 60, 75.

divination were permitted, if performed without malicious intent.¹ The prohibition of midnight sacrifices, which seemed to be required by the public morals, threatened to deprive the Greeks of their cherished mysteries. Prætextatus, then Proconsul of Achaia, the head of the Pagan party, a man of high and unblemished character, represented to the emperor that these rites were necessary to the existence of the Greeks. The law was relaxed in their favor, on the condition of strict adherence to ancient usage. In Rome, the Vestal virgins maintained their sanctity; the altar of Victory, restored by Julian, preserved its place; a military guard protected the temples from insult, but a tolerant as well as prudent provision forbade the employment of Christian soldiers on this service.² On the other hand, Valentinian appears to have Laws of Valentinian. revoked some of the lavish endowments conferred by Julian on the Heathen temples. These estates were re-incorporated with the private treasure of the sovereign.³ At a later period of his reign, there must have been some general prohibition of animal sacrifice; the Pagan worship was restricted to the offering of incense to the gods.⁴ But, according to the expression of Libanius, they dared not execute this law in Rome, so fatal would it have been considered to the welfare of the empire.⁵

Valens in the East, as Valentinian in the West, allowed perfect freedom to the public ritual of Paganism. But both in the East and in Prosecutions for magic.

¹ Cod. Theod. ix. 16, 9.

² Cod. Theod. xvi. 1. 1.

³ Cod. Theod. x. 1, 8. The law reads as if it were a more general and indiscriminate confiscation.

⁴ Lib. pro Templis, vii. p. 163, ed. Reiske. This arose out of some recent and peculiar circumstances.

⁵ Liban. vol. ii. p. 180.

the West, the persecution against magic and unlawful divination told with tremendous force against the Pagan cause. It was the more fatal, because it was not openly directed against the religion, but against practices denounced as criminal, and believed to be real, by the general sentiment of mankind, and prosecuted by that fierce animosity which is engendered by fear. Some compassion might be felt for innocent victims, supposed to be unjustly implicated in such charges; the practice of extorting evidence or confession by torture might be revolting to those especially who looked back with pride and with envy to the boasted immunity of all Roman citizens from such cruelties; but, where strong suspicion of guilt prevailed, the public feeling would ratify the stern sentence of the law against such delinquents: the magician or the witch would pass to execution amid the universal abhorrence. The notorious connection of any particular religious party with such dreaded and abominated proceedings, especially if proved by the conviction of a considerable majority of the condemned from their ranks, would tend to depress the religion itself. This sentiment was not altogether unjust. Paganism had, as it were, in its desperation, thrown itself upon the inextinguishable superstition of the human mind. The more the Pagans were depressed, the hope of regaining their lost superiority, the desire of vengeance, would induce them to seize on every method of awing or commanding the minds of their wavering votaries. Nor were those who condescended to these arts, or those who in many cases claimed the honors annexed to such fearful powers, only the bigoted priesthood, or mere itinerant traders in human credulity: the high philosophic party, which

had gained such predominant influence during the reign of Julian, now wielded the terrors and incurred the penalties of these dark and forbidden practices. It is impossible to read their writings without remarking a boastful display of intercourse with supernatural agents, which to the Christian would appear an illicit communion with malignant spirits. This was not, indeed, magic, but it was the groundwork of it. The theurgy, or mysterious dealings of the Platonic philosopher with the demons or still higher powers, was separated by a thin and imperceptible distinction from Goetic or unlawful enchantment. Divination, indeed, or the foreknowledge of futurity by different arts, was an essential part of the Greek and Roman religion. But divination had, in Greece at least, withdrawn from its public office. It had retired from the silenced oracles of Delphi or Dodona. The gods, rebuked according to the Christian, offended according to the Pagan, had withdrawn their presence. In Rome, the Etruscan soothsayers, as part of the great national ceremonial, maintained their place, and to a late period preserved their influence over the public mind. But, in general, it was only in secret, and to its peculiar favorites, that the summoned or spontaneous deity revealed the secrets of futurity ; it was by the dream, or the private omen, the sign in the heavens, vouchsafed only to the initiate ; or the direct inspiration ; or, if risked, it was by the secret, mysterious, usually the nocturnal rite, that the reluctant god was compelled to disclose the course of fate.

The persecutions of Valentinian in Rome were directed against magical ceremonies. The Pagans, who remembered the somewhat os-
Cruelty of
Valentinian.
tentatious lenity and patience of Julian on the public

tribunal, might contrast the more than inexorable, the inquisitorial and sanguinary, justice of the Christian Valentinian, even in ordinary cases, with the benignant precepts of his religion. But justice with Valentinian, in all cases, more particularly in these persecutions, degenerated into savage tyranny. The emperor kept two fierce bears by his own chamber, to which the miserable criminals were thrown in his presence, while the unrelenting Valentinian listened with ferocious delight to their groans. One of these animals, as a reward for his faithful service to the state, received his freedom, and was let loose into his native forest.¹

Maximin, the representative of Valentinian at Rome, administered the laws with all the vindictive ferocity, but without the severe dignity, of his imperial master. Maximin was of an obscure and barbarian family, settled in Pannonia. He had attained the government of Corsica and Sardinia, and subsequently of Tuscany. He was promoted in Rome to the important office of superintendent of the markets of the city. During the illness of Olybius, the Prefect of Rome, the supreme judicial authority had been delegated to Maximin. Maximin was himself rumored to have dabbled in necromantic arts; and lived in constant terror of accusation till released by the death of his accomplice. This rumor may create a suspicion that Maximin was, at least at the time at which the accusation pointed, a Pagan. The Pagan-

¹ The Christians did not escape these legal murders, constantly perpetrated by the orders of Valentinian. In Milan, the place where three obscure victims were buried was called Ad Innocentes. When he had condemned the decurions of three towns to be put to death, in a remonstrance against their execution, it was stated that they would be worshipped as martyrs by the Christians.—Amm. Marc. xxvii. 7.

ism of a large proportion of his victims is more evident. The first trial over which Maximin presided was a charge made by Chilon, vicar of the prefects, and his wife, Maximia, against three obscure persons for attempting their lives by magical arts: of these, one was a soothsayer.¹ Cruel tortures extorted from these miserable men a wild string of charges at once against persons of the highest rank and of the basest degree. All had tampered with unlawful arts, and had mingled with them the crimes of murder, poisoning, and adultery. A general charge of magic hung over the whole city. Maximin poured these dark rumors into the greedy ear of Valentinian, and obtained the authority which he coveted, for making a strict inquisition into these offences, for exacting evidence by torture from men of every rank and station, and for condemning them to a barbarous and ignominious death. The crime of magic was declared of equal enormity with treason; the rights of Roman citizenship, and the special privileges granted by the imperial edicts, were suspended;² neither the person of senator or dignitary was sacred against the scourge or the rack. The powers of this extraordinary commission were exercised with the utmost latitude and most implacable severity. Anonymous accusations were received; Maximin was understood to have declared that no one should be esteemed innocent whom he chose to find guilty.

But the details of this persecution belong to our history only as far as they relate to religion. On general grounds, it may be inferred that the chief brunt of this sanguinary persecution fell on the Pagan party.

¹ Haruspex.

² "Juris prisce justitia et divorum arbitria." — Amm. Marc.

Magic — although at that time, perhaps, the insatiate curiosity about the future, the indelible passion for supernatural excitement, and even more criminal designs, might betray some few professed Christians into this direct treason against their religion — was an offence which, in general, would have been held in dread and abhorrence by the members of the Church. In the laws, it is invariably denounced as a Pagan crime. The aristocracy of Rome were the chief victims of Maximin's cruelty; and in this class, till its final extinction, was the stronghold of Paganism. It is not assuming too much influence for the Christianity of that age, to consider the immoralities and crimes, the adulteries and the poisonings, which were mingled up with these charges of magic, as the vestiges of the old unpurified Roman manners. The Christianity of that period ran into the excess of monastic asceticism, for which the enthusiasm, to judge from the works of St. Jerome, was at its height; and this violation of nature had not yet produced its remote but apparently inevitable consequence, — dissoluteness of morals. In almost every case recorded by the historian may be traced indications of Pagan religious usages. A soothsayer, as it has appeared, was involved in the first criminal charge. While his meaner accomplices were beaten to death by straps loaded with lead, the judge having bound himself by an oath that they should neither die by fire nor steel, the soothsayer, to whom he had made no such pledge, was burned alive. The affair of Hymettius betrays the same connection with the ancient religion. Hymettius had been accused, seemingly without justice, of malversation in his office of Proconsul of Africa, in

Connection
of these
crimes with
Paganism.

the supplies of corn to the metropolis. A celebrated soothsayer (*haruspex*), named *Amantius*, was charged with offering sacrifices, by the command of *Hymettius*, with some unlawful or treasonable design. *Amantius* resisted the torture with unbroken courage: but among his papers was found a writing of *Hymettius*, of which one part contained bitter invectives against the avaricious and cruel *Valentinian*; the other implored *Amantius*, by sacrifices, to induce the gods to mitigate the anger of both the emperors. *Amantius* suffered capital punishment. A youth named *Lollianus*, convicted of inconsiderately copying a book of magical incantations and condemned to exile, had the rashness to appeal to the emperor, and suffered death. *Lollianus* was the son of *Lampadius*, formerly Prefect of Rome,¹ and, for his zeal for the restoration of the ancient buildings, and his vanity in causing his own name to be inscribed on them, was called the *Lichen*. *Lampadius* was probably a Pagan. The leader of that party, *Prætextatus*, whose unimpeachable character maintained the universal respect of all parties, was the head of a deputation to the emperor,² entreating him that the punishment might be proportionate to the offences, and claiming for the senatorial order their immemorial exemption from the unusual and illegal application of torture. On the whole, this relentless and sanguinary inquisition into the crime of magic, enveloping in one dreadful proscription a large proportion of the higher orders of Rome and of the West, even if not directly, must incidentally, have weakened the cause of Paganism, connected

¹ Tillemont thinks *Lampadius* to have been a Christian; but his reasons are to me inconclusive.

² *Amm. Marc.* xxvii. 1, &c.

it in many minds with dark and hateful practices, and altogether increased the deepening animosity against it.

In the East, the fate of Paganism was still more adverse. There is strong ground for supposing that the rebellion of Procopius was connected with the revival of Julian's party.

In the East,
rebellion of
Procopius,
A.D. 365.

It was assiduously rumored abroad that Procopius had been designated as his successor by the expiring Julian. Procopius, before the soldiery, proclaimed himself the relative and heir of Julian.¹ The astrologers had predicted the elevation of Procopius to the greatest height,—of empire, as his partisans fondly hoped; of misery, as the ingenious seers expounded the meaning of their oracle after his death.² The Pagan and philosophic party were more directly and exclusively implicated in the fatal event, which was disclosed to the trembling Valens at Antioch, and

brought as wide and relentless desolation on the East as the cruelty of Maximin on the West. It was mingled up with treasonable designs against the throne and the life of the emperor. The magical ceremony of divination, which was denounced before Valens, was Pagan throughout all its dark and mysterious circumstances.³ The tripod on which the conspirators performed their ill-omened rites was

A.D. 368.

¹ Amm. Marc. xxvi. 6.

² See Le Beau, iii. p. 250.

³ Ὡστε αὐτὸν τῶν ἐπὶ ταῖς μεγίσταις ἀρχαῖς γνωρισθέντων, ἐν τῷ μεγέθει τῆς συμφορᾶς γενέσθαι διασημότερον. He was deceived by the Genethliaci. — Greg. Nyss. de Fato.

⁴ Philostorgius describes it as a prediction of the Gentile oracles. Τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν χρηστηρίων. — lib. viii. c. 15.

I cannot but suspect that the prohibition of sacrifice mentioned by Libanius, which seems contrary to the general policy of the brothers, and was but partially carried into execution, may have been connected with these transactions.

modelled after that at Delphi; it was consecrated by magic songs and frequent and daily ceremonies, according to the established ritual. The house where the rite was held was purified by incense; a kind of charger made of mixed metals was placed upon the altar, around the rim of which were letters at certain intervals. The officiating diviner wore the habit of a Heathen priest, the linen garments, sandals, and a fillet wreathed round his head, and held a sprig of an auspicious plant in his hand; he chanted the accustomed hymn to Apollo, the god of prophecy. The divination was performed by a ring running round on a slender thread and pointing to certain letters, which formed an oracle in heroic verse, like those of Delphi. The fatal prophecy then pointed to the three first and the last letters of a name, like *Theodorus*, as the fated successor of Valens.

Among the innumerable victims to the fears and the vengeance of Valens, whom the ordinary prisons were not capacious enough to contain, those who either were, or were suspected of having been, intrusted with the fatal secret, were almost all the chiefs of the philosophic party. Hilarius of Phrygia, with whom are associated, by one historian, Patricius of Lydia and Andronicus of Caria, all men of the most profound learning,¹ and skilled in divination, were those who had been consulted on that unpardoned and unpardonable offence, the inquiring the name of the successor to the reigning sovereign. They were, in fact, the conductors of the magic ceremony, and in their confession betrayed the secret circumstances of the incantation. Some, among whom appears the name of Iamblichus, escaped by miracle from torture and

¹ Zosimus, iv. 15.

execution.¹ Libanius himself (this may be observed as evidence how closely magic and philosophy were mingled up together in the popular opinion) had already escaped with difficulty two charges of unlawful practices;² on this occasion, to the general surprise, he had the same good fortune: either the favor or the clemency of the emperor, or some interest with the general accusers of his friends, exempted him from the common peril. Of those whose sufferings are recorded, Pasiphilus resisted the extremity of torture rather than give evidence against an innocent man: that man was Eutropius, who held the rank of Proconsul of Asia. Simonides, though but a youth, was one of the most austere disciples of philosophy. He boldly admitted that he was cognizant of the dangerous secret, but he kept it undivulged. Simonides was judged worthy of a more barbarous death than the rest: he was condemned to be burned alive; and the martyr of philosophy calmly ascended the funeral pile.

The fate of Maximus, since the death of Julian, had been marked with strange vicissitude. With Priscus, on the accession of Valentinian, he was summoned before the imperial tribunal. The blameless Priscus was dismissed; but Maximus, who, according to his own friends, had displayed, during the life of Julian, a pomp and luxuriousness unseemly in a philosopher, was sent back to Ephesus, and amerced in a heavy fine, utterly disproportioned to philosophic poverty. The fine was mitigated, but, in its diminished amount, exacted by cruel tortures. Maximus, in his agony, entreated his wife to purchase poison to rid him of his miserable life. The wife obeyed, but insisted on tak-

¹ See Zonaras, 13, 2.

² Vit. i. 114.

ing the first draught: she drank, expired, and Maximus—declined to drink. He was so fortunate as to attract the notice of Clearchus, Proconsul of Asia: he was released from his bonds, rose in wealth and influence, returned to Constantinople, and resumed his former state. The fatal secret had been communicated to Maximus. He had the wisdom, his partisan declared the prophetic foresight, to discern the perilous consequences of the treason. He predicted the speedy death of himself and of all who were in possession of the secret. He added, it is said, a more wonderful oracle,—that the emperor himself would soon perish by a strange death, and not even find burial. Maximus was apprehended, and carried to Antioch. After a hasty trial, in which he confessed his knowledge of the oracle, but declared that he esteemed it unworthy of a philosopher to divulge a secret intrusted to him by his friends, he was taken back to Ephesus, and there executed with all the rest of his party who were implicated in the conspiracy. Festus, it is said, who presided over the execution, was haunted in after life by a vision of Maximus dragging him to judgment before the infernal deities.¹ Though a despiser of the gods, a Christian, Festus was compelled by his terrors to sacrifice to the Eumenides, the avengers of blood; and, having so done, he fell down dead. So completely did the cause of the Pagan deities appear involved with that of the persecuted philosophers.

Nor was this persecution without considerable influence on the literature of Greece. So severe an inquisition was instituted into the possession of magical books, that, in order to justify their sanguinary proceedings, vast heaps of manuscripts relating to law

¹ Eunap. Vit. Maxim. Amm. Marc. xxix. 1.

and general literature were publicly burned, as if they contained unlawful matter. Many men of letters throughout the East, in their terror, destroyed their whole libraries, lest some innocent or unsuspected work should be seized by the ignorant or malicious informer, and bring them unknowingly within the relentless penalties of the law.¹ From this period, philosophy is almost extinct; and Paganism, in the East, drags on its silent and inglorious existence, deprived of its literary aristocracy, and opposing only the inert resistance of habit to the triumphant energy of Christianity.

Arianism, under the influence of Valens, main-
State of
Christianity
in the East.
tained its ascendancy in the East. Through-
out the whole of that division of the empire,
the two forms of Christianity still subsisted in irrecon-
cilable hostility. Almost every city had two prelates,
each at the head of his separate communion; the one,
according to the powers or the numbers of his party,
assuming the rank and title of the legitimate bishop,
and looking down, though with jealous animosity, on
his factious rival. During the life of Athanasius, the
see of Alexandria remained faithful to the Trinitarian
doctrines. For a short period, indeed, the prelate was
obliged to retire, during what is called his fifth exile,
to the tomb of his father; but he was speedily wel-
comed back by the acclamations of his followers, and
the baffled imperial authority acquiesced in his peace-
ful rule till his decease. But at his death, five years
afterwards, were renewed the old scenes of discord
and bloodshed. Palladius, the Prefect of
A.D. 378. Egypt, received the imperial commission to

¹ *Amm. Marcell. xxix. 1.* "Inde factum est per Orientales provincias, ut omnes metu similium exurerent libraria omnia: tantus universos invaserat terror." — *xxix. 2.* Compare Heyne, note on Zosimus.

install the Arian prelate, Lucius, on the throne of Alexandria. Palladius was a Pagan, and the Catholic writers bitterly reproach their rivals with this monstrous alliance. It was rumored that the Pagan population welcomed the Arian prelate with hymns of gratulation as the friend of the god Serapis, as the restorer of his worship.

In Constantinople, Valens had received baptism from Eudoxus, the aged Arian prelate of that see. Sacerdotal influence, once obtained A.D. 370. over the feeble mind of Valens, was likely to carry him to any extreme; yet, on the other hand, he might be restrained and overawed by calm and dignified resistance. In general, therefore, he might yield himself up as an instrument to the passions, jealousies, and persecuting violence of his own party: while he might have recourse to violence to place Demophilus on the episcopal throne of Constantinople, he might be awed into a more tolerant and equitable tone by the eloquence and commanding character of Basil. It is unjust to load the memory of Valens with the most atrocious crime which has been charged upon him by the vindictive exaggeration of his triumphant religious adversaries. As a deputation of eighty Catholic ecclesiastics of Constantinople were returning from Nicomedia, the vessel was burned, the crew took to the boat, the ecclesiastics perished to a man. As no one escaped to tell the tale, and the crew, if accomplices, were not likely to accuse themselves, we may fairly doubt the assertion that orders had been secretly issued by Valens to perpetrate this wanton barbarity.

The memorable interview with St. Basil, as it is related by the Catholic party, displays, if the Interview with Basil weakness, certainly the patience and tolera-

tion, of the sovereign ; if the uncompromising firmness of the prelate, some of that leaven of pride with which he is taunted by Jerome.

During his circuit through the Asiatic provinces, the emperor approached the city of Cæsarea in Cappadocia. Modestus, the violent and unscrupulous favorite of Valens, was sent before, to persuade the bishop to submit to the religion of the emperor. Basil was

A.D. 371. inflexible. "Know you not," said the offended officer, "that I have power to strip you

of all your possessions, to banish you, to deprive you of life?" "He," answered Basil, "who possesses nothing can lose nothing: all you can take from me is the wretched garments I wear, and the few books, which are my only wealth. As to exile, the earth is the Lord's; everywhere it will be my country, or rather my place of pilgrimage. Death will be a mercy; it will but admit me into life: long have I been dead to this world." Modestus expressed his surprise at this unusual tone of intrepid address. "You have never, then," replied the prelate, "before conversed with a bishop?" Modestus returned to his master. "Violence will be the only course with this man, who is neither to be appalled by menaces, nor won by blandishments." But the emperor shrunk from such harsh measures. His humbler supplication confined itself to the admission of Arians into the communion of Basil; but he implored in vain. The emperor mingled with the crowd of undistinguished worshippers; but he was so impressed by the solemnity of the Catholic service, the deep and full chanting of the psalms, the silent adoration of the people, the order and the majesty, as well as by the calm dignity, of the bishop and of his attendant clergy, which

appeared more like the serenity of angels than the busy scene of mortal men, that, awe-struck and overpowered, he scarcely ventured to approach to make his offering. The clergy stood irresolute whether they were to receive it from the infectious hand of an Arian; Basil, at length, while the trembling emperor leaned for support on an attendant priest, condescended to advance and accept the oblation. But neither supplications nor bribes nor threats could induce the bishop to admit the sovereign to the communion. In a personal interview, instead of convincing the bishop, Valens was so overpowered by the eloquence of Basil, as to bestow an endowment on the church for the use of the poor. A scene of mingled intrigue and asserted miracle ensued. The exile of Basil was determined, but the mind of Valens was alarmed by the dangerous illness of his son. The prayers of Basil were said to have restored the youth to life; but a short time after, having been baptized by Arian hands, he relapsed and died. Basil, however, maintained his place and dignity to the end.¹

But the fate of Valens drew on. It was followed by the first permanent establishment of the barbarians within the frontiers of the Roman empire. Christianity now began to assume a new and important function, — that assimilation and union between the conquerors and the conquered, which prevented the total extinction of the Roman civilization, and the oppression of Europe by complete and almost hopeless barbarism. However Christianity might have disturbed the peace, and therefore, in some degree, the stability, of the empire,

Effect of
Christianity
in mitigating
the evils of
barbarian
invasion.

¹ Greg. Naz., Orat. xx.; Greg. Nyss. contra Eunom.; and the ecclesiastical historians, *in loc.*

by the religious factions which distracted the principal cities; however that foreign principle of celibacy, which had now become completely identified with it, by withdrawing so many active and powerful minds into the cloister or the hermitage, may have diminished the civil energies, and even have impaired the military forces of the empire,¹—yet the enterprising and victorious religion amply repaid those injuries by its influence in remodelling the new state of society. If treacherous to the interests of the Roman empire, it was true to those of mankind. Throughout the whole process of the resettling of Europe and the other provinces of the empire, by the migratory tribes from the north and east, and the vast system of colonization and conquest which introduced one or more new races into every province, Christianity was the one common bond, the harmonizing principle, which subdued to something like unity the adverse and conflicting elements of society. Christianity, no doubt, while it discharged this lofty mission, could not but undergo a great and desecrating change. It might repress, but could not altogether subdue, the advance of barbarism; it was constrained to accommodate itself to the spirit of the times; while struggling to counteract barbarism, itself became barbarized. It lost at once much of its purity and its gentleness; it became splendid and imaginative, warlike, and at length chivalrous.

When a country in a comparatively high state of

¹ Valens, perceiving the actual operation of this unwarlike dedication of so many able-bodied men to useless inactivity, attempted to correct the evil by law, and by the strong interference of the government. He invaded the monasteries and solitary hermitages of Egypt, and swept the monks by thousands into the ranks of his army. But a reluctant Egyptian monk would, in general, make but an indifferent soldier.

civilization is overrun by a foreign and martial horde, in numbers too great to be absorbed by the local population, the conquerors usually establish themselves as a kind of armed aristocracy, while the conquered are depressed into a race of slaves. Where there is no connecting, no intermediate power, the two races co-exist in stern and implacable hostility. The difference in privilege, and often in the territorial possession of the land, is increased and rendered more strongly marked by the total want of communion in blood. Intermarriages, if not, as commonly, prohibited by law, are almost entirely discountenanced by general opinion. Such was, in fact, the ordinary process in the formation of the society which arose out of the ruins of the Roman empire. The conquerors became usually a military aristocracy; assumed the property in the conquered lands, or, at least, a considerable share in the landed estates, and laid the groundwork for that feudal system which was afterwards developed with more or less completeness in different countries of Europe.

One thing alone, in some cases, tempered, during the process of conquest, the irreclaimable hostility; in all, after the final settlement, moulded up together in some degree the adverse powers. Where, as in the Gothic invasion, it had made some previous impression on the invading race, Christianity was constantly present, silently mitigating the horrors of the war, and afterwards blending together, at least to a certain extent, the rival races. At all times, it became the connecting link, the intermediate power, which gave some community of interest, some similarity of feeling, to the master and the slave. They worshipped at least the same God, in the same church; and the care of the same clergy embraced

Influence of
the clergy.

both with something of an harmonizing and equalizing superintendence. The Christian clergy occupied a singular position in this new state of society. At the earlier period, they were, in general, Roman; later, though sometimes barbarian by birth, they were Roman in education. When the prostration of the conquered people was complete, there was still an order of people, not strictly belonging to either race, which maintained a commanding attitude, and possessed certain authority. The Christian bishop confronted the barbarian sovereign or took his rank among the leading nobles. During the invasion, the Christian clergy, though their possessions were ravaged in the indiscriminate warfare, though their persons were not always secure from insult or from slavery, yet, on the whole, retained, or very soon resumed, a certain sanctity, and hastened, before long, to wind their chains around the minds of the conquerors. Before a new invasion, Christianity had, in general, mingled the invaders with the invaded; till at length Europe, instead of being a number of disconnected kingdoms, hostile in race, in civil polity, in religion, was united in a kind of federal Christian republic, on a principle of unity, acknowledging the supremacy of the pope.

The overweening authority claimed and exercised by the clergy, their existence as a separate and exclusive caste, at this particular period in the progress of civilization, became of the highest utility. A religion without a powerful and separate sacerdotal order, even, perhaps, if that order had not in general been bound to celibacy and so prevented from degenerating into an hereditary caste, would have been absorbed and lost in the conflict and confusion of the times. Religion, unless invested by

Their importance in this new state of things.

general opinion in high authority, and that authority asserted by an active and incorporated class, would scarcely have struggled through this complete disorganization of all the existing relations of society. The respect which the clergy maintained was increased by their being almost the exclusive possessors of that learning which commands the reverence even of barbarians, when not actually engaged in war. A religion which rests on a written record, however that record may be but rarely studied, and by a few only of its professed interpreters, enforces general respect to literary attainment. Though the traditional commentary may overload or supersede the original book, the commentary itself is necessarily committed to writing, and becomes another subject of honored and laborious study. All other kinds of literature, as far as they survive, gladly rank themselves under the protection of that which commands reverence for its religious authority. The cloister or the religious foundation thus became the place of refuge to all that remained of letters or of arts. Knowledge brooded in secret, though almost with unproductive, yet with life-sustaining warmth, over these secluded treasures. But it was not merely an inert and quiescent resistance which was thus offered to barbarism: it was perpetually extending its encroachments, as well as maintaining its place. Perhaps the degree to which the Roman language modified the Teutonic tongues may be a fair example of the extent to which the Roman civilization generally leavened the manners and the laws of the Northern nations.

The language of the conquered people lived in the religious ritual. Throughout the rapid succession of invaders who passed over Europe,

Influence of
Christianity
on literature,

on language,

seeking their final settlement, some in the remotest province of Africa, before the formation of other dialects, the Latin was kept alive as the language of Western Christianity. The clergy were its conservators, the Vulgate Bible and the offices of the Church its depositaries, unviolated by any barbarous interruption, respected as the oracles of divine truth. But the constant repetition of this language in the ears of the mingled people can scarcely have been without influence in increasing and strengthening the Roman element in the common language, which gradually grew up from mutual intercourse, intermarriage, and all the other bonds of community which blended together the various races.

The old municipal institutions of the empire probably owed their permanence, in no inconsiderable degree, to Christianity. It has been observed in what manner on the municipal institutions, the decurionate, the municipal authorities of each town, through the extraordinary and oppressive system of taxation, from guardians of the liberties of the people, became mere passive and unwilling agents of the Government. Responsible for payments which they could not exact, men of opulence, men of humanity, shrunk from the public offices. From objects of honorable ambition, these functions had become burdens, loaded with unrepaid unpopularity, assumed by compulsion, and exercised with reluctance. The *defensors*, instituted by Valentinian and Valens, however they might afford temporary protection and relief to the lower orders, scarcely exercised any long or lasting influence on the state of society. Yet the municipal authorities at least retained the power of administering the laws; and, as the law became more and more impregnated with Christian sen-

timent, it assumed something of a religious as well as civil authority. The magistrate became, as it were, an ally of the Christian bishop; the institutions had a sacred character, besides that of their general utility. Whatever remained of commerce and of art subsisted chiefly among the old Roman population of the cities, which was already Christian; and hence, perhaps, the guilds and fraternities of the trades, which may be traced up to an early period, gradually assumed a sort of religious bond of union. In all points, the Roman civilization and Christianity, when the latter had completely pervaded the various orders of men, began to make common cause; and during all the time that this disorganization of conquest and new settlement was taking place in this groundwork of the Roman social system, and the loose elements of society were severing by gradual disunion, a new confederative principle arose in these smaller aggregations, as well as in the general population of the empire. The Church became another centre of union. Men incorporated themselves together, not only, nor so much, as fellow-citizens, as fellow-Christians. They submitted to an authority co-ordinate with the civil power, and united as members of the same religious fraternity.

Christianity, to a certain degree, changed the general habits of men. For a time, at least, on general habits. they were less public, more private and domestic, men. The tendency of Christianity, while the Christians composed a separate and distinct community, to withdraw men from public affairs; their less frequent attendance on the courts of law, which were superseded by their own peculiar arbitration; their repugnance to the ordinary amusements, which soon, however, in the large cities, such as Antioch and Con-

stantinople, wore off, — all these principles of disunion ceased to operate when Christianity became the dominant, and at length the exclusive, religion. The Christian community became the people; the shows, the pomps, the ceremonial, of the religion, replaced the former seasons of periodical popular excitement; the amusements which were not extirpated by the change of sentiment — some theatrical exhibitions and the chariot race — were crowded with Christian spectators; Christians ascended the tribunals of law: not only the spirit and language of the New Testament, but likewise of the Old, entered both into the Roman jurisprudence and into the various barbarian codes, in which the Roman law was mingled with the old Teutonic usages. Thus Christianity was perpetually discharging the double office of conservator, with regard to the social institutions with which she had entered into alliance, and of mediator between the conflicting races which she was gathering together under her own wing. Where the relation between the foreign conqueror and the conquered inhabitant of the empire was that of master and slave, the Roman ecclesiastic still maintained his independence, and speedily regained his authority; he only admitted the barbarian into his order on the condition that he became to a certain degree Romanized; and there can be no doubt that the gentle influence of Christian charity and humanity was not without its effect in mitigating the lot, or at least in consoling the misery of the change from independence or superiority to humiliation and servitude. Where the two races mingled, as seems to have been the case in some of the towns and cities, on more equal terms, by strengthening the municipal institutions with something of a religious character, and by

its own powerful federative principle, it condensed them much more speedily into one people, and assimilated their manners, habits, and usages.

Christianity had early, as it were, prepared the way for this amalgamation of the Goths with the Roman empire. In their first inroads during the reign of Gallienus, when the Goths ravished a large part of the Roman empire, they carried away numbers of slaves, especially from Asia Minor and Cappadocia. Among these were many Christians. The slaves subdued the conquerors; the gentle doctrines of Christianity made their way to the hearts of the barbarous warriors. The families of the slaves continued to supply the priesthood to this growing community. A Gothic bishop,¹ with a Greek name, Theophilus, attended at the Council of Nicæa; Ulphilas, at the time of the invasion in the reign of Valens, consecrated bishop of the Goths during an embassy to Constantinople, was of Cappadocian descent.² Among the Goths, Christianity first assumed its new office, the advancement of general civilization, as well as of purer religion. It is difficult to suppose that the art of writing was altogether unknown to the Goths before the time of Ulphilas. The language seems to have attained a high degree of artificial perfection before it was employed by that prelate in the translation of the Scriptures.³ Still the Mæso-Gothic alphabet, of which the Greek is by far the principal element, was

Early
Christianity
among the
Goths.

Ulphilas's
version of the
Scriptures.

¹ Philostorgius, ii. 5.

² Socrates, ii. 41.

³ The Gothic of Ulphilas is the link between the East and Europe, the transition state from the Sanscrit to the modern Teutonic languages. It is possible that the Goths, after their migration from the East to the north of Germany, may have lost the art of writing, partly from the want of materials. The German forests would afford no substitute for the palm-leaves of the East; they may have been reduced to the barbarous runes of the other Heathen tribes. Compare Bopp., Conjugations System.

generally adopted by the Goths.¹ It was universally disseminated; it was perpetuated, until the extinction or absorption of the Gothic race in other tribes, by the translation of the sacred writings. This was the work of Ulphilas, who in his version of the Scriptures,² is reported to have omitted, with a Christian but vain precaution, the books of Kings, lest, being too congenial to the spirit of his countrymen, they should inflame their warlike enthusiasm. Whether the genuine mildness of Christianity, or some patriotic reverence for the Roman empire, from which he drew his descent, influenced the pious bishop, the martial ardor of the Goths was not the less fatal to the stability of the Roman empire. Christianity did not even mitigate the violence of the shock with which, for the first time, a whole host of Northern barbarians was thrown upon the empire, never again to be shaken off. This Gothic invasion, which first established a Teutonic nation within the frontier of the empire, was con-

¹ The Mæso-Gothic alphabet has twenty-five letters, of which fifteen are evidently Greek, eight Latin. The two, *th* and *hw*, to which the Greek and Latin have no corresponding sound, are derived from some other quarter. They are most likely ancient characters. The *th* resembles closely the Runic letter which expresses the same sound. See St. Martin, note on Le Beau, iii. p. 120.

² The greater part of the fragments of Ulphilas's version of the Scriptures now extant is contained in the celebrated Codex Argenteus, now at Upsala. This splendid MS., written in silver letters, on parchment of a purple ground, contains almost the whole four Gospels. Knittel, in 1762, discovered five chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in a Palimpsest MS. at Wolfenbüttel. The best edition of the whole of this is by J. Christ. Zahn. Weissenfels, 1805. Since that time, M. Mai has published, from Milan Palimpsests, several other fragments, chiefly of the other Epistles of St. Paul. Milan, 1819. — St. Martin, notes to Le Beau, iii. 100. On the Gothic translation of the Scriptures, see Socrat. iv. 33. Sozom. vi. 37. Philostorgius, ii. 5. Compare Theodoret, v. 30–31. A complete edition of the remains of the Bible of Ulphilas was published by Dr. Gabelentz and Dr. Löbe, 1838, but the most useful edition is that of Massmann. Stuttgart, 1857.

ducted with all the ferocity — provoked indeed on the part of the Romans by the basest treachery — of hostile races with no bond of connection.¹

The pacificatory effect of the general conversion of the Goths to Christianity was impeded by the form of faith which they embraced. The Gothic prelates, Ulphilas among the rest, who visited the court of Constantinople, found the Arian Arianism of the Goths. bishops in possession of the chief authority; they were the recognized prelates of the empire. Whether their less cultivated minds were unable to comprehend, or their language to express, the fine and subtle distinctions of the Trinitarian faith, or they were persuaded, as it was said, by the Arian bishops that it was mere verbal dispute, these doctrines were introduced among the Goths before their passage of the Danube, or their settlement within the empire. The whole nation received this form of Christianity; from them it appears to have spread, first embracing the other branch of the nation, the Ostrogoths, among the Gepidæ, the Vandals, and the Burgundians.² Among the barbaric conquerors was the stronghold of Arianism; while it was gradually repudiated by the Romans both in the East and in the West, it raised its head, and obtained a superiority which it had never before attained, in Italy and Spain. Whether more congenial to the simplicity of the barbaric mind, or in

¹ It is remarkable to find a Christian priest employed as an ambassador between the Goths and the Romans, and either the willing or undesigning instrument of that stratagem of the Gothic general which was so fatal to Valens. — Amm. Marc. xxxi. 12.

² "Sic quoque Visigothi a Valente Imperatore Ariani potius quam Christiani effecti. De cætero tam Ostrogothis, quam Gepidis parentibus suis per affectionis gratiam evangelizantes, hujus perfidiæ culturam edocentes omnem ubique linguæ hujus nationem ad culturam hujus sectæ incitavere." — Jordan. c. 25.

some respects cherished on one side by the conqueror as a proud distinction, and more cordially detested by the Roman population, as the creed of their barbarous masters, Arianism appeared almost to make common cause with the Teutonic invaders, and only fell with the Gothic monarchies in Italy and in Spain. While Gratian and Valentinian the Second espoused the cause of Trinitarianism in the West (we shall hereafter resume the Christian history of that division of the empire), by measures which show that their sacerdotal advisers were men of greater energy and decision than their civil ministers, Arianism subsisted almost as a foreign and barbarous form of Christianity.¹

¹ The Bible of Ulphilas was the Bible of all the Gothic races. Massmann, *Die Unruhe wie die Nothdrang des äusseren Lebens, der inwohnen-den Thatreich des einheitlichen nordischen Menschengeschlechtes, das die Welt erneuen und befreien sollte, führte dasselbe von den friedlichen Ufern der Ostsee über die Donau vielmals bis vor die Thore des Constantinopel, zu den blutbetränkten Gestaden des Schwarzsee wie des Mittelmeeres, bis tief nach Asien, in und über Italien und Frankreich bis nach Spanien und Africa, überall aber trugen sie Ulfilas Bibel mit sich.* — Einleitung X. Massmann observes, p. xxiii., that there is no trace of Arianism in the surviving remains of the Gothic translation of the New Testament. The Gothic of Philip. ii. 6 has been misunderstood. The Arian Goths professed to adhere to the words of Scripture; they avoided the *Homoiousios* and *Homooousios*; they called themselves Catholics, and were singularly tolerant of the orthodox tenets and of the Catholic clergy. Compare Latin Christianity, Book III. c. 2.

CHAPTER VIII.

Theodosius. Abolition of Paganism.

THE fate of Valens summoned to the empire a sovereign not merely qualified to infuse a conservative vigor into the civil and military administration of the empire, but to compress into one uniform system the religion of the Roman world. It was necessary that Christianity should acquire a complete predominance, and that it should be consolidated into one vigorous and harmonious system. The relegation, as it were, of Arianism among the Goths and other barbarous tribes, though it might thereby gain a temporary accession of strength, did not permanently impede the final triumph of Trinitarianism. While the imperial power was thus lending its strongest aid for the complete triumph and concentration of Christianity, from the peculiar character of the mind of Theodosius, the sacerdotal order, on the strength and unity of which was to rest the permanent influence of Christianity during the approaching centuries of darkness, assumed new energy. A religious emperor, under certain circumstances, might have been the most dangerous adversary of the priestly power; he would have asserted with vigor, which could not at that time be resisted, the supremacy of the civil authority. But the weaknesses, the vices, of the great Theodosius, bowed him down before the aspiring priesthood, who, in asserting and advancing their own

authority, were asserting the cause of humanity. The passionate tyrant at the feet of the Christian prelate, deploring the rash resentment which had condemned a whole city to massacre; the prelate exacting the severest penance for the outrage on justice and on humanity, — stand in extraordinary contrast with the older Cæsars, themselves the priesthood, without remonstrance or without humiliation, glutting their lusts or their resentment with the misery and blood of their subjects.

The accession of Theodosius was hailed with universal enthusiasm throughout the empire
A.D. 379. The pressing fears of barbaric invasion on every frontier silenced for a time the jealousies of Christian and Pagan, of Arian and Trinitarian. On the shore of each of the great rivers which bounded the empire, appeared a host of menacing invaders. The Persians, the Armenians, the Iberians, were prepared to pass the Euphrates or the eastern frontier; the Danube had already afforded a passage to the Goths; behind them were the Huns in still more formidable and multiplying swarms; the Franks and the rest of the German nations were crowding to the Rhine. Paganism, as well as Christianity, hastened to pay its grateful homage to the deliverer of the empire; the eloquent Themistius addressed Theodosius in the name of the imperial city; Libanius ventured to call on the Christian emperor to revenge the death of Julian, that crime for which the gods were exacting just retribution. Pagan poetry awoke from its long silence; the glory of Theodosius and his family inspired its last noble effort in the verse of Claudian.

Theodosius was a Spaniard. In that province Christianity had probably found less resistance from the

feeble provincial Paganism; nor was there, as in Gaul, an old national religion which lingered in the minds of the native population. Christianity was early and permanently established in the Peninsula. To Theodosius, who was but slightly tinged with the love of letters or the tastes of a more liberal education, the colossal temples of the East, or the more graceful and harmonious fabrics of Europe, would probably create no feeling but that of aversion from the shrines of idolatry. His Christianity was pure from any of the old Pagan associations; unsoftened, it may, perhaps, be said, by any feeling for art, and unawed by any reverence for the ancient religion of Rome: he was a soldier, a provincial, an hereditary Christian of a simple and unquestioning faith; and he added to all this the consciousness of consummate vigor and ability, and a choleric and vehement temperament.

Spain, throughout the Trinitarian controversy, perhaps from the commanding influence of Hosius, had firmly adhered to the Athanasian doctrines. The Manichean tenets, for which Priscillian and his followers suffered (the first heretics condemned to death for their opinions), were but recently introduced into the province.

Thus, by character and education, deeply impressed with Christianity, and that of a severe and uncompromising orthodoxy, Theodosius undertook the sacred obligation of extirpating Paganism, and of restoring to Christianity its severe and inviolable unity. Without tracing the succession of events throughout his reign, we may survey the Christian emperor in his acts; first, as commencing, if not completing, the forcible extermination of Paganism; secondly, as confirming Christianity, and extending the authority of

the sacerdotal order; and thirdly, as establishing the uniform orthodoxy of the Western Roman Church.

The laws of Theodosius against the Pagan sacrifices grew insensibly more and more severe. The inspection of the entrails of victims, and magic rites, were made capital offences. In A.D. 391, issued an edict prohibiting sacrifices, and even the entering into the temples. In the same year, a rescript was addressed to the court and Prefect of Egypt, fining the governors of provinces who should enter a temple fifteen pounds of gold, and giving a kind of authority to the subordinate officers to prevent their superiors from committing such offences. The same year, all unlawful sacrifices are prohibited by night or day, within or without the temples. In 392, all immolation is prohibited under the penalty of death, and all other acts of idolatry under forfeiture of the house or land in which the offence shall have been committed.¹

The Pagan temples, left standing in all their majesty, but desecrated, deserted, overgrown, would have been the most splendid monument to the triumph of Christianity. If, with the disdain of conscious strength, she had allowed them to remain without victim, without priest, without worshipper, but uninjured and only exposed to natural decay from time and neglect, posterity would not merely have been grateful for the preservation of such stupendous and graceful models of art, but would have been strongly impressed with admiration of her magnanimity. But such magnanimity was neither to be expected from the age or the state of the religion. The Christians believed in the existence of the Heathen deities, with, perhaps, more

¹ Cod. Theod. xvi. 10, 7, 11, 12.

undoubting faith than the Heathens themselves. The demons who inhabited the temples were spirits of malignant and pernicious power, which it was no less the interest than the duty of the Christian to expel from their proud and attractive mansions.¹ The temples were the strongholds of the vigilant and active adversaries of Christian truth and Christian purity, of the enemies of God and man. The idols, it is true, were but wood and stone, but the beings they represented were real; they hovered, perhaps, in the air; they were still present in the consecrated spot, though rebuked and controlled by the mightier name of Christ, yet able to surprise the careless Christian in his hour of supineness or negligent adherence to his faith or his duty. When zeal inflamed the Christian populace to aggression upon any of these ancient and time-hallowed buildings, no doubt some latent awe lingered within; something of the suspense of doubtful warfare watched the issue of the strife. However they might have worked themselves up to the conviction that their ancient gods were but of this inferior and hostile nature, they would still be haunted by some apprehensions, lest they should not be secure of the protection of Christ, or of the angels and saints in the new tutelar hierarchy of Heaven. The old deities might not have been so completely rebuked and controlled as not to retain some power of injuring their rebellious votaries. It was at last, even to the faithful, a conflict between two unequal supernatural agencies; unequal indeed, particularly where the faith of the Christian was fervent and sincere, yet dependent for its event on the confidence of that faith which

¹ "Dii enim Gentium dæmonia, ut Scriptura docet." — Ambros. *Epist. Resp. at Synmach. in init.*

sometimes trembled at its own insufficiency, and feared lest it should be abandoned by the divine support in the moment of strife.

Throughout the East and West, the monks were the chief actors in this holy warfare. They are constantly spoken of by the Heathen writers in terms of the bitterest reproach and contempt. The most particular accounts of their proceedings relate to the East. Their desultory attacks were chiefly confined to the country, where the numberless shrines, images, and smaller temples were at the same time less protected, and more dear to the feelings of the people. In the towns, the larger fanes, if less guarded by the reverence of their worshippers, were under the protection of the municipal police.¹ Christianity was long almost exclusively the religion of the towns; and the term "Paganism" (notwithstanding the difficulties which embarrass this explanation) appears to owe its origin to this general distinction. The agricultural population, liable to frequent vicissitudes, trembled to offend the gods, on whom depended the plenty or the failure of the harvest. Habits are more intimately inwoven with the whole being in the regular labors of husbandry, than in the more various and changeable occupations of the city. The whole Heathen ritual was bound up with the course of agriculture: this was the oldest part both of the Grecian and Italian worship, and had experienced less change from the spirit of the times. In every field, in every garden, stood a deity; shrines and lesser temples were erected in every grove, by every fountain. The drought, the mildew, the murrain, the locusts, — whatever was destructive to the harvest or

¹ *Τολμᾶται μὲν οὖν καὶ ταῖς πόλεσι, τὸ πολὺ δὲ ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς.* — Libani pro Templis.

to the herd, was in the power of these capricious deities.¹ Even when converted to Christianity, the peasant trembled at the consequences of his own apostasy ; and it is probable, that until the whole of this race of tutelary deities had been gradually replaced by what we must call the inferior divinities of Paganizing Christianity, — saints, martyrs, and angels, — Christianity was not extensively or permanently established in the rural districts.²

During the reign of Constantine, that first sign of a decaying religion, the alienation of the property attached to its maintenance, began to be discerned. Some estates belonging to the temples were seized by the first Christian emperor, and appropriated to the building of Constantinople. The favorites of his successor, as we have seen, were enriched by the donation of other sacred estates, and even of the temples themselves.³ Julian restored the greater part of these prodigal gifts ; but they were once more resumed under Valentinian, and the estates escheated to the imperial revenue. Soon after the accession of Theodosius, the Pagans, particularly in the East, saw the storm gathering in the horizon. The monks, with perfect impunity, traversed the rural districts, demolishing all the unprotected edifices. In vain did the Pagans appeal to the episcopal authority ;

Alienation
of the reve-
nue of the
temples.

¹ Καὶ τοῖς γεωργοῦσιν ἐν αὐτοῖς αἱ ἐλπίδες, ὅσαι περὶ τε ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν, καὶ τέκνων καὶ βοῶν, καὶ τῆς σπειρομένης γῆς καὶ πεφνυτευμένης
--- Liban. pro Templis.

² This difference prevailed equally in the West. Fleury gives an account of the martyrdom of three missionaries by the rural population of a district in the Tyrol, who resented the abolition of their deities and their religious ceremonies. — Hist. Eccles. v. 64.

³ They were bestowed, according to Libanius, with no more respect than a horse, a slave, a dog, or a golden cup. The position of the *slave* between the horse and the dog, as cheap gifts, is curious enough. — Liban. C p. v. ii p. 185

the bishops declined to repress the over-active perhaps but pious zeal of their adherents. Already much destruction had taken place among the smaller rural shrines; the temples in Antioch, of Fortune, of Jove, of Athene, of Dionysus, were still standing; but the demolition of one stately temple, either at Edessa or Palmyra, and this under the pretext of the imperial authority, had awakened all the fears of the Pagans.

Oration of
Libanius.

Libanius addressed an elaborate oration to the emperor, "For the Temples."¹ Like Christianity under the Antonines, Paganism is now making its apology for its public worship. Paganism is reduced to still lower humiliation: one of its modest arguments against the destruction of its temples is an appeal to the taste and love of splendor, in favor of buildings at least as ornamental to the cities as the imperial palaces.² The orator even stoops to suggest, that, if alienated from religious uses, and let for profane purposes, they might be a productive source of revenue. But the eloquence and arguments of Libanius were wasted on deaf and unheeding ears. The

Syrian
temples
destroyed.

war against the temples commenced in Syria; but it was not conducted with complete success. In many cities the inhabitants rose in defence of their sacred buildings, and, with the Persian on the frontier, a religious war might have endangered the allegiance of these provinces. The splendid temples, of which the ruins have recently been discovered, at Petra,³ were defended by the zealous worshippers; and in those, as well as at Areopolis and Raphia, in

¹ This oration was probably not delivered in the presence of Theodosius.

² Liban. *pro Templis*, p. 190.

³ Laborde's Journey. In most of these buildings, Roman architecture of the age of the Antonines is manifest, raised in general on the enormous substructions of much earlier ages.

Palestine, the Pagan ceremonial continued without disturbance. In Gaza, the temple of the tutelary deity, Marnas, the lord of men, was closed; but the Christians did not venture to violate it. The form of some of the Syrian edifices allowed their transformation into Christian churches; they were enclosed, and made to admit sufficient light for the services of the church. A temple at Damascus, and another at Heliopolis or Baalbec,¹ were consecrated to the Christian worship. Marcellus of Apamea was the martyr in this holy warfare. He had signalized himself by the destruction of the temples in his own city, particularly that of Jupiter, whose solid foundations defied the artificers and soldiery employed in the work of demolition, and required the aid of miracle to undermine them. But, on an expedition into the district of Apamea, called the Aulon, the rude inhabitants rose in defence of their sacred edifice, seized Marcellus, and burned him alive. The synod of the province refused to revenge on his barbarous enemies a death so happy for Marcellus and so glorious for his family.²

The work of demolition was not long content with these less famous edifices, these outworks of Paganism; it aspired to attack its strongest citadels, and, by the public destruction of one of the most celebrated temples in the world, to announce that Polytheism had forever lost its hold upon the minds of men.³

It was considered the highest praise of the magnifi-

¹ If this (as indeed is not likely) was the vast Temple of the Sun, the work of successive ages, it is probable that a Christian church was enclosed in some part of its precincts. The sanctuary was usually taken for this purpose.

² Sozomen, vii. 15. Theodoret, v. 21.

³ Compare throughout, *Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme dans l'Empire d'Orient*, par Etienne Chastel, Paris, 1850. This work, crowned by the Institute, is perhaps not quite of so high order as that of M. Beugnot on the destruction of Paganism in the West, but is still a very valuable book.

cent temple in Edessa, of which the roof was of remarkable construction, and which contained in its secret sanctuary certain very celebrated statues of wrought iron, and whose fall had excited the indignant eloquence of Libanius, to compare it to the Serapion in Alexandria. The Serapion, at that time, appeared secure in the superstition, which connected its inviolable sanctity, and the honor of its god,¹ with the rise and fall of the Nile, with the fertility and existence of Egypt, and, as Egypt was the granary of the East, the existence of Constantinople. The Pagans had little apprehension that the Serapion itself, before many years, would be levelled to the ground.

The temple of Serapis, next to that of Jupiter in the Capitol, was the proudest monument of Pagan religious architecture.² Like the more celebrated structures of the East, and that of Jerusalem in its glory, it comprehended within its precincts a vast mass of buildings, of which the temple itself formed the centre. It was built on an artificial hill, in the old quarter of the city, called Rhacotis. The ascent to it was by a hundred steps. All the substructure was vaulted over; and in these dark chambers, which communicated with each other, were supposed to be carried on the most fearful, and, to the Christian, abominable mysteries. All around the spacious level platform were the habitations of the priests, and of the ascetics dedicated to the worship of the god. Within these outworks of this city rather than temple was a square, surrounded on all sides with a magnificent portico. In the centre arose the

A. D. 389,
or 391.

¹ Libanius expresses himself to this effect.

² "Post Capitolium, quo se venerabilis Roma in æternum attollit, nihil orbis terrarum ambitiosius cernat." — Ammian. Marcell. xxii. 16.

temple, on pillars of enormous magnitude and beautiful proportion. The work either of Alexander himself or of the first Ptolemy aspired to unite the colossal grandeur of Egyptian with the fine harmony of Grecian art. The god himself was the especial object of adoration throughout the whole country, and throughout every part of the empire into which the Egyptian worship had penetrated,¹ but more particularly in Alexandria; and the wise policy of the Ptolemies had blended together, under this pliant and all-embracing religion, the different races of their subjects. Egyptian and Greek met as worshippers of Serapis. The Serapis of Egypt was said to Worship of Serapis. have been worshipped for ages at Sinope; he was transported from that city with great pomp and splendor, to be re-incorporated, as it were, and re-identified with his ancient prototype. While the Egyptians worshipped in Serapis the great vivific principle of the universe, the fecundating Nile, holding the Nilometer for his sceptre, the Lord of Amen-ti, the President of the regions beyond the grave,—the Greeks, at the same time, recognized the blended attributes of their Dionysus, Helios, Æsculapius, and Hades.²

The colossal statue of Serapis embodied these various attributes.³ It filled the sanctuary: its out-Statue of Serapis.stretched and all-embracing arms touched the walls; the right the one, the left the other. It was said to have been the work of Sesostris; it was made of all the metals fused together,—gold, silver,

¹ In Egypt alone he had forty-two temples; innumerable others in every part of the Roman empire. — Aristid. Orat. in Canop.

² This appears to me the most natural interpretation of the celebrated passage in Tacitus. Compare De Guigniaut, *Le Dieu Serapis et son Origine*, originally written as a note for Bournouf's Translation of Tacitus.

³ The statue is described by Macrobius, *Saturn.* i. 20; Clemens Alexandrin., *Exhortat. ad Gent.* i. p. 42; Rufinus, *E. H.* xii. 23

copper, iron, lead, and tin ; it was inlaid with all kinds of precious stones ; the whole was polished, and appeared of an azure color. The measure or bushel, the emblem of productiveness or plenty, crowned its head. By its side stood the symbolic three-headed animal, one the fore-part of a lion, one of a dog, one of a wolf. In this the Greeks saw the type of their poetic Cerberus.¹ The serpent, the symbol of eternity, wound round the whole, and returned resting its head on the hand of the god.

The more completely the adoration of Serapis had absorbed the worship of the whole Egyptian pantheon, the more eagerly Christianity desired to triumph over the representative of Polytheism. However, in the time of Hadrian, the philosophic party may have endeavored to blend and harmonize the two faiths,² they stood now in their old direct and irreconcilable opposition. The suppression of the internal feuds between the opposite parties in Alexandria, enabled Christianity to direct all its concentrated force against

The first attacks on Paganism. Paganism. Theophilus, the archbishop, was a man of boldness and activity, eager to seize and skilful to avail himself of every opportunity to inflame the popular mind against the Heathens. A priest of Serapis was accused and convicted of practising those licentious designs against the virtue of the female worshippers, so frequently attributed to the priesthood of the Eastern religions. The noblest and most beautiful women were persuaded to submit to the embraces of the god, whose place, under the favorable darkness caused by the sudden extinction

¹ According to the interpretation of Macrobius, the three heads represented the past, the present, and the future: the rapacious wolf, the past; the central lion, the intermediate present; the fawning dog, the hopeful future.

² See the Letter of Hadrian, vol. ii. p. 108.

of the lamps in the temple, was filled by the priest. These inauspicious rumors prepared the inevitable collision. A neglected temple of Osiris or Dionysus had been granted by Constantius to the Arians of Alexandria. Theophilus obtained from the emperor a grant of the vacant site for a new church, to accommodate the increasing numbers of the Catholic Christians. On digging the foundation, there were discovered many of the obscene symbols, used in the Bacchic or Osirian mysteries. Theophilus, with more regard to the success of his cause than to decency, exposed these ludicrous or disgusting objects in the public market place, to the contempt and abhorrence of the people. The Pagans, indignant at this treatment of their sacred symbols, and maddened by the scorn and ridicule of the Christians, took up arms. The streets ran with blood; and many Christians who fell in this tumultuous fray received the honors of martyrdom. A philosopher, named Olym-
Olympus the philosopher.
 pus, placed himself at the head of the Pagan party. Olympus had foreseen and predicted the ruin of the external worship of Polytheism. He had endeavored to implant a profound feeling in the hearts of the Pagans which might survive the destruction of their ordinary objects of worship. "The statues of the gods are but perishable and material images: the eternal intelligences, which dwelt within them, have withdrawn to the heavens."¹ Yet Olympus hoped, and at first with his impassioned eloquence succeeded, in rousing his Pagan compatriots to a bold defiance of the public authorities in support of their religion.

¹ Ὑλην φθαρτὴν καὶ ἐνδάλματα λέγων εἶναι τὰ ἀγάλματα, καὶ διὰ τούτου ἁφανισμὸν ὑπομένειν· ὁνόμεναι δὲ τινὰς ἐνοικῆσαι αὐτοῖς, καὶ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀποπτῆναι. — Sozom., H. E. vii. 15.

Faction and rivalry supplied what was wanting to faith; and it appeared that Paganism would likewise boast its army of martyrs,—martyrs, not indeed through patient submission to the persecutor, but in heroic despair perishing with their gods.

The Pagans at first were the aggressors; they sallied from their fortress, the Serapion, seized the War in the city. unhappy Christians whom they met, forced them to sacrifice on their altar, or slew them upon it, or threw them into the deep trench defiled with the blood and offal of sacrifice. In vain Evagrius, the Prefect of Egypt, and Romanus, the commander of the troops, appeared before the gates of the Temple, remonstrated with the garrison, who appeared at the windows, against their barbarities, and menaced them with the just vengeance of the law. They were obliged to withdraw, baffled and disregarded, and to await the orders of the emperor. Olympus exhorted his followers to the height of religious heroism. “Having made a glorious sacrifice of our enemies, let us immolate ourselves, and perish with our gods.” But, before the rescript arrived, Olympus had disappeared: Flight of Olympus. he had stolen out of the Temple, and embarked for Italy. The Christian writers do honor to his sagacity or to his prophetic powers, at the expense of his courage and fidelity to his party. In the dead of night, when all was slumbering around, and all the gates closed, he had heard the Christian Alleluia pealing from a single voice through the silent temple. He acknowledged the sign or the omen, and anticipated the unfavorable sentence of the emperor, the fate of his faction and of his gods.

The eastern Pagans, it should seem, were little acquainted with the real character of Theodosius.

When the rescript arrived, they laid down their arms, and assembled in peaceful array before the temple, as if they expected the sentence of the emperor in their own favor.¹ The officer began: the first words of the rescript plainly intimated the Rescript of Theodosius. abhorrence of Theodosius against idolatry. Cries of triumph from the Christians interrupted the proceedings; the panic-stricken Pagans, abandoning their temple and their god, silently dispersed; they sought out the most secret places of refuge; they fled their country. Two of the celebrated pontiffs, one of Amoun, one of "the Ape," retired to Constantinople, where the one, Ammonius, taught in a school, and continued to deplore the fall of Paganism; Helladius, the other, was known to boast the part he had taken in the sedition of Alexandria, in which, with his own hand, he had slain nine Christians.²

The imperial rescript at once went beyond and fell short of the fears of the Pagans. It disdained to exact vengeance for the blood of the Christian martyrs, who had been so happy as to lay down their lives for their Redeemer; but it commanded the destruction of the idolatrous temples: it confiscated all the ornaments, and ordered the statues to be melted or broken up for the benefit of the poor.

Theophilus hastened in his triumphant zeal to execute the ordinance of the emperor. Marching, with

¹ If the oration of Libanius, exhorting the emperor to revenge the death of Julian, was really presented to Theodosius, it betrays something of the same ignorance. He seems to think his arguments not unlikely to meet with success; at all events, he appears not to have the least notion that Theodosius would not respect the memory of the apostate.

² Socrat., Eccl. Hist. v. 16. Helladius is mentioned in a law of Theodosius the younger, as a celebrated grammarian elevated to certain honors. This law is, however, dated 425; at least five and thirty years after this transaction.

the prefect at the head of the military, the invaders ascended the steps to the temple of Serapis. They surveyed the vacant chambers of the priests and the ascetics; they paused to pillage the library;¹ they entered the deserted sanctuary; they stood in the presence of the god. The sight of this colossal image, for centuries an object of worship, struck awe to the hearts of the Christians themselves. They stood silent, inactive, trembling. The archbishop alone maintained his courage: he commanded a soldier to proceed to the assault. The soldier struck the statue with his hatchet on the knee. The blow echoed through the breathless hall, but no sound or sign of divine vengeance ensued; the roof of the temple fell not to crush the sacrilegious assailant nor did the pavement heave and quake beneath his feet. The emboldened soldier climbed up to the head and struck it off; it rolled upon the ground. Serapis gave no sign of life, but a large colony of rats, disturbed in their peaceful abode, ran about on all sides. The passions of the multitude are always in extremes. From breathless awe they passed at once to ungovernable mirth. The work of destruction went on amid peals of laughter, coarse jests, and shouts of acclamation; and, as the fragments of the huge body of Serapis were dragged through the streets, the Pagans, with that revulsion of feeling common to the superstitious populace, joined in the insult and mockery against their unresisting and self-abandoned god.²

¹ "Nos vidimus armaria librorum; quibus direptis, exinanita ea a nostris hominibus, nostris temporibus memorant." — Oros. vi. 15.

² They were said to have discovered several of the tricks by which the priests of Serapis imposed on the credulity of their worshippers. An aperture of the wall was so contrived, that the light of the sun, at a particular time, fell on the face of Serapis. The sun was then thought to visit Serapis;

The solid walls and deep foundations of the Temple offered more unsurmountable resistance to the baffled zeal of the Christians; the work of demolition proceeded but slowly with the massive architecture;¹ and, some time after, a church was erected in the precincts, to look down upon the ruins of idolatry, which still frowned in desolate grandeur upon their conquerors.²

Yet the Christians, even after their complete triumph, were not without some lingering terrors; the Pagans, not without hopes that a fearful vengeance would be exacted from the land for this sacrilegious extirpation of their ancient deities. Serapis was either the Nile, or the deity who presided over the periodical inundations of the river. The Nilometer, which measured the rise of the waters, was kept in the temple. Would the indignant river refuse its fertilizing moisture; keep sullenly within its banks, and leave the ungrateful land blasted with perpetual drought and barrenness? As the time of the inundation approached, all Egypt was in a state of trembling suspense. Long beyond the accustomed day the waters remained at their usual level; there was no sign of overflowing. The people began to murmur; the murmurs swelled into indignant remonstrances; the usual rites and sacrifices were demanded from the reluctant prefect, who despatched a hasty messenger to the emperor for in-

and at the moment of their meeting, the flashing light threw a smile on the lips of the deity. There is another story of a magnet on the roof, which, as in the fable about Mohammed's coffin, raised either a small statue of the deity, or the sun in a car with four horses, to the roof, and there held it suspended. A Christian withdrew the magnet, the car fell, and was dashed to pieces on the pavement.

¹ Compare Eunap., Vit. Ædesii, p. 44, edit. Boissonade.

² The Christians rejoiced in discovering the cross in various parts of the building; they were inclined to suppose it miraculous or prophetic of their triumph. But, in fact, the crux ansata is a common hieroglyphic, a symbol of life

structions. There was every appearance of a general insurrection; the Pagans triumphed in their turn: but before the answer of the emperor arrived, which replied, in uncompromising faith, "that, if the inundation of the river could only be obtained by magic and impious rites, let it remain dry; the fertility of Egypt must not be purchased by an act of infidelity to God"¹—suddenly, the waters began to swell, an inundation more full and extensive than usual spread over the land, and the versatile Pagans had now no course but to join again with the Christians in mockeries against the impotence of their gods.

But Christianity was not content with the demolition of the Serapion; its predominance throughout Egypt may be estimated by the bitter complaint of the Pagan writer: "Whoever wore a black dress (the monks are designated by this description) was invested in tyrannical power; philosophy and piety to the gods were compelled to retire into secret places, and to dwell in contented poverty and dignified meanness of appearance. The temples were turned into tombs for the adoration of the bones of the basest and most depraved of men who had suffered the penalty of the law, whom they made their gods."² Such was the light in which the martyr-worship of the Christians appeared to the Pagans.

The demolition of the Serapion was a penalty inflicted on the Pagans of Alexandria for their sedition and sanguinary violence; but the example was too encouraging, the hope of impunity under the present

¹ Improbable as it may seem, that such an answer should be given by a statesman like Theodosius, yet it is strongly characteristic of the times. The emperor neither denies the power of the malignant demons worshipped by the idolaters, nor the efficacy of enchantments, to obtain their favor and to force from them the retarded overflow of the river.

² Eunap., Vit. *Ædesii*, *loc. cit.*

government too confident, not to spread through other cities of Egypt. It moved on to Canopus, where the principle of humidity was worshipped in the form of a vase, with a human head. Theophilus, who considered Canopus within his diocese, marched at the head of his triumphant party, demolished the temples, abolished the rites, which were distinguished for their dissolute license, and established monasteries in the place. Canopus, from a city of revel and debauchery, became a city of monks.¹

The persecution extended throughout Egypt; but the vast buildings which even now subsist, the successive works of the Pharaohs, the Ptolemies, and the Roman emperors, having triumphed alike over time, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, show either some reverent reluctance to deprive the country of its most magnificent ornaments, or the inefficiency of the instruments which they employed in the work of devastation. For once it was less easy for men to destroy than to preserve; the power of demolition was rebuked before the strength and solidity of these erections of primeval art.

The war, as we have seen, raged with the same partial and imperfect success in Syria; with less, probably, in Asia Minor; least of all in Greece. The demolition was nowhere general or systematic. Wherever monastic Christianity was completely predominant, there emulous zeal excited the laity to these aggressions on Paganism. But in Greece the noblest buildings of antiquity, at Olympia, Eleusis, Athens,² show

¹ The Christians laughed at Canopus being called "the conqueror of the gods." The origin of this name was, that the principle of fire, the god of the Chaldeans, had been extinguished by the water within the statue of Canopus, the principle of humidity.

² The Parthenon, it is well known, was entire, till towards the close of the

in their decay the slower process of neglect and time, of accident and the gradual encroachment of later barbarism, rather than the iconoclastic destructiveness of early religious zeal.¹

In the West, the task of St. Martin of Tours, the great extirpator of idolatry in Gaul, was comparatively easy; and his achievements by no means so much to be lamented as those of the destroyers of the purer models of architecture in the East. The life of this saint by Sulpicius, in which the comparatively polished and classical style singularly contrasts with the strange and legendary incidents which it relates, describes St. Martin as making regular campaigns into all the region, destroying, wherever he could, the shrines and temples of the Heathen, and replacing them by churches and monasteries. So completely was his excited imagination full of his work, that he declared that Satan often assumed the visible form of Jove, of Mercury, of Venus, or of Minerva, to divert him, no doubt, from his holy design, and to protect their trembling fanes.²

But the power and the majesty of Paganism were still concentrated at Rome; the deities of the ancient faith found their last refuge in the sixteenth century. Its roof was destroyed during the siege by the Venetians. See Spon. and Wheler's Travels.

¹ The council of Illiberis refused the honors of martyrdom to those who were killed while breaking idols. — Can. lx.

The invasion of the Goths (Eunapius accuses the black monks of having betrayed Thermopylæ to them) carried devastation into Greece and Peloponnesus. These newly converted barbarians had no feeling for art. They burned Corinth, Amyclæ, Lacedæmon, Olympia (from that time the games ceased), with all their glorious temples and noble statues. Zosimus asserts that Minerva preserved Athens. Her apparition appalled Alaric. But Ceres did not protect Eleusis. There was a frightful massacre of the Hierophants among the ruins of the temple. (Eunapius, *in loc.*, Los. v. 6.) Compare Chastel, p. 215. Palmerayer, *Geschichte der Morea*, 136.

² Sulpic. Sever., Vit. B. Martini, p. 469.

Paganism
at Rome.

capital of the empire. To the stranger, Rome still offered the appearance of a Pagan city; it contained one hundred and fifty-two temples, and one hundred and eighty smaller chapels or shrines, still sacred to their tutelary God, and used for public worship.¹ Christianity had neither ventured to usurp those few buildings which might be converted to her use, still less had she the power to destroy them. The religious edifices were under the protection of the prefect of the city, and the prefect was usually a Pagan; at all events, he would not permit any breach of the public peace, or violation of public property. Above all still towered the capitol, in its unassailed and awful majesty, with its fifty temples or shrines, bearing the most sacred names in the religious and civil annals of Rome,—those of Jove, of Mars, of Janus, of Romulus, of Cæsar, of Victory. Some years after the accession of Theodosius to the Eastern empire, the sacrifices were still performed as national rites at the public cost; the pontiffs made their offerings in the name of the whole human race. The Pagan orator ventures to assert that the emperor dared not to endanger the safety of the empire by their abolition.² The emperor still bore the title and insignia of the supreme pontiff; the consuls, before they entered upon their functions, ascended the capitol; the religious processions passed along the crowded streets; and the people thronged to the festivals and theatres, which still formed part of the Pagan worship.

¹ See the *Descriptiones Urbis*, which bear the names of Publicus Victor, and Sextus Rufus Festus. These works could not have been written before or long after the reign of Valentinian. Compare Beugnot, *Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme en Occident*. M. Beugnot has made out, on more or less satisfactory evidence, a list of the deities still worshipped in Italy.—*c. i. l. viii. c. 9.* St. Augustin, when young, was present at the rites of Cybele, about A.D. 374.

² Liban. *pro Templis*.

But the edifice had begun to tremble to its foundations. The emperor had ceased to reside at Rome; the mind of Theodosius, as afterwards that of Gratian, and that of the younger Valentinian, was free from those early inculcated and daily renewed impressions of the majesty of the ancient Paganism which still enthralled the minds of the Roman aristocracy. Of that aristocracy, the flower and the pride was Vettius Agorius Prætextatus.¹ In him the wisdom of Pagan philosophy blended with the serious piety of Pagan religion: he lived to witness the commencement of the last fatal change which he had no power to avert; he died, and his death was deplored as a public calamity, in time to escape the final extinction, or rather degradation, of Paganism. Only eight years before the fatal accession of Gratian, and the year of his own death, he had publicly consecrated twelve statues in the capitol, with all becoming splendor, to the *Dii curantes*, the great guardian deities of Rome.² It was not only the ancient religion of Rome which still maintained some part of its dignity, all the other religions of the empire, which still publicly celebrated their rites, and retained their temples in the metropolis, concentrated all their honors on Prætextatus, and took refuge, as it were, under the protection of his blameless and venerable name. His titles in an extant inscription announce him as having attained, besides the countless honors of Roman civil and religious dignity, the

¹ See on Prætextatus, Macrob. Saturn. i. 2. Symmachi Epistolæ, i. 40, 43, 45; ii. 7, 34, 36, 53, 59. — Hieronym. Epistolæ, xxiii.

² This appears from an inscription recently discovered (A.D. 1835), and published in the *Bulletino* of the Archaeological Society of Rome. Compare Bunsen, *Roms Beschreibung*, vol. iii. p. 9.

highest rank in the Eleusinian, Phrygian, Syrian, and Mithriac mysteries.¹ His wife boasted the same religious titles; she was the priestess of the same mysteries, with the addition of some peculiar to the female sex.² She celebrated the funeral, even the apotheosis, of her noble husband A.D. 381. with the utmost pomp: he was the last Pagan, probably, who received the honors of deification.³ All Rome crowded, in sorrow and profound reverence, to the ceremony. In the language of the vehement Jerome there is a singular mixture of enforced respect and of aversion; he describes (to moralize at the awful change) and contrasts with his funeral the former triumphant ascent of the capitol by Prætextatus amid the acclamations of the whole city; he admits the popularity of his life, but condemns him, without remorse, to eternal misery.⁴

¹ "Augur, Pontifex Vestæ, Pontifex Solis, Quindecemvir, Curialis Herculis, sacratus Libero et Eleusiniis, Hierophanta, Neocorus, Tauroboliat, Pater Patrum." — Gruter, p. 1102, No. 2.

² "Sacrata apud Eleusinam Deo Baccho, Cereri, et Coræ, apud Lernam, Deo Libero, et Cereri, et Coræ, sacrata apud Æginam Deabus; Taurobolitæ, Isiæ, Hierophantiæ Deæ Hecatæ, sacrata Deæ Cereris." — Gruter, 309.

³ Read the two beautiful poems, one a short one addressed by Vettius Agorius Prætextatus to his wife, Aconia Fabia Paulina; the other, longer, by Paulina to her husband. I subjoin some lines from that of Paulina:—

Tu me, marite, disciplinarum bono
Puram ac pudicam sorte mortis eximens,
In templa ducis ac famulam divis dicas.
Te teste cunctis imbuor mysteriis,
Tu Dindymenes Atteosque antistitem
Teletis honoras taureis consors pius,
Hecates ministram trina secreta edoces,
Cererisque Graiæ tu sacris dignari paras.
Te propter omnes me beatam, me piam
Celebrant, quod ipse me bonam disseminas
Totum per orbem. Ignota noscor omnibus,
Nam te marito cui placere non queam.
Exempla de me Romulæ matres petunt.
Sobolemque pulchram, si tuæ similis, putant
Optant probantque nunc viri nunc feminae.

Apud Meyer Anthologia Latina, B. 128

"O quanta rerum mutatio! Ille quem ante paucos dies dignitatum om-

Up to the accession of Gratian, the Christian emperor had assumed, as a matter of course, the supremacy over the religion, as well as the state, of Rome. He had been formally arrayed in the robes of the sovereign pontiff. For the first few years of his reign, Gratian maintained the inaggressive policy of his father Valentinian.¹ But the masculine mind of Ambrose obtained, and indeed had deserved by his public services, the supremacy over the feeble youth; and the influence of Ambrose began to reveal itself in a succession of acts, which plainly showed that the fate of Paganism drew near. When Gratian was in Gaul, the senate of Rome remembered that he had not been officially arrayed in the dignity of the supreme pontificate. A solemn deputation from Rome attended to perform the customary ceremonial. The idolatrous honor was disdainfully rejected. The event was heard in Rome with consternation; it was the first overt act of separation between the religious and the civil power of the empire.² The next hostile measure was still more unexpected. Notwithstanding the manifest authority assumed by Christianity, and by one of the Christian prelates best qualified by his own determined character to wield at his will the weak and irresolute Gratian; notwithstanding the long ill-suppressed murmurs, and now bold and

nium culmina præcedebant, qui quasi de subjectis hostibus triumpharet, Capitolinas ascendit arces; quem plausu quodam et tripudio populus Romanus excepit, ad cujus intentum urbs universa commota est, — nunc desolatus et nudus, . . . non in lacteo cœli palatio ut uxor mentitur infelix, sed in sordentibus tenebris continetur.” — Hieronym. Epist. xxiii. vol. i. p. 135.

¹ M. Beugnot considers that Gratian was tolerant of Paganism from his accession, A.D. 367 to 382. He was sixteen when he ascended the throne, and became the first Augustus on the death of Valens, A.D. 378.

² Zosimus, iv. 36. The date of this transaction is conjectural. The opinion of La Bastie, *Mém. des Inscript.* xv. 141, is followed.

authoritative remonstrances, against all toleration, and all connivance at Heathen idolatry, — it might have been thought that any other victim would have been chosen from the synod of gods ; that all other statues would have been thrown prostrate, all other worship proscribed, before that of Victory. Con-
Statue of
Victory.
 stantius, though he had calmly surveyed the other monuments of Roman superstition, admired their majesty, and read the inscriptions over the porticos of the temples, had nevertheless given orders for the removal of this statue, and this alone, — its removal, it may be suspected, not without some superstitious reverence, — to the rival capital.¹ Victory had been restored by Julian to the senate-house at Rome, where she had so long presided over the counsels of the conquering republic and of the empire. She had maintained her place during the reign of Valentinian. The decree that the statue of Victory was to be ignominiously dragged from its pedestal in the senate-house, that the altar was to be removed, and the act of public worship, with which the senate had for centuries of uninterrupted prosperity and
A.D. 382.
 glory commenced and hallowed its proceedings, discontinued, fell like a thunderbolt among the partisans of the ancient worship. Surprise yielded to indignation. By the advice of Prætextatus, a solemn deputation was sent to remonstrate with the emperor. The Christian party in the senate were strong enough to forward, through the bishop Damasus, a counter petition, declaring their resolution to abstain from attendance in the senate so long as it should be

¹ Constantius (the whole account of this transaction is vague and uncircumstantial), acting in the spirit of his father, who collected a great number of the best statues to adorn the new capital, perhaps intended to transplant Victory to Constantinople.

defiled by an idolatrous ceremonial. Gratian coldly dismissed the deputation, though headed by the eloquent Symmachus, as not representing the unanimous sentiments of the senate.¹

This first open aggression on the Paganism of Rome was followed by a law which confiscated at once all the property of the temples, and swept away the privileges and immunities of the priesthood. The fate of the Vestal virgins excited the strongest commiseration. They now passed unhonored through the streets. The violence done to this institution, co-eval with Rome itself, was aggravated by the bitter mockery of the Christians at the importance attached to those few and rare instances of chastity by the Pagans. They scoffed at the small number of the sacred virgins; at the occasional delinquencies (for it is singular that almost the last act of Pagan pontifical authority was the capital punishment of an unchaste Vestal); the privilege they possessed and sometimes claimed, of marriage after a certain period of service, when, according to the severer Christians, such unholy desires should have been long extinct.² If the state is to reward virginity (said the vehement Ambrose), the claims of the Christians would exhaust the treasury.

¹ It is very singular that, even at this very time, severe laws seem to have been necessary to punish apostates from Christianity. In 381, Theodosius deprived such persons of the right of bequeathing their property. Similar laws were passed in 383 and 391 against those "*qui ex Christianis Pagani facti sunt; qui ad Paganos ritus cultusque migrarunt; qui venerabili religione neglectâ ad aras et templa transierint.*" — Cod. Theodos. xvi. 7 1 2, 4, 5.

² Prudentius, though he wrote later, expresses this sentiment: -

*Nubit anus veterana, sacro perfuncta labore,
Desertisque focus, quibus est famulata juvenis,
Transfert invitas ad fulcra jugalia rugas,
Discit et in gelido nova nupta calefcere lecto.*

Adv. Symm. lib. II.

By this confiscation of the sacerdotal property, which had hitherto maintained the priesthood in opulence, the temples and the sacrificial rights in splendor, the Pagan hierarchy became stipendiaries of the state, the immediate step to their total dissolution. The public funds were still charged with a certain expenditure¹ for the maintenance of the public ceremonies. This was not abrogated till after Theodosius had again united the whole empire under his conquering sway, and shared with Christianity the subjugated world.

In the interval, Heathenism made perhaps more than one desperate though feeble struggle for the ascendancy. Gratian was murdered in the year 383. Valentinian II. succeeded to the sole empire of the West. The celebrated Symmachus became Prefect of Rome. Symmachus commanded the respect, and even deserved the common attachment, of all his countrymen; he ventured (a rare example in those days) to interfere between the tyranny of the sovereign and the menaced welfare of the people. An uncorrupt magistrate, he deprecated the increasing burdens of unnecessary taxes which weighed down the people; he dared to suggest that the eager petitions for office should be at once rejected, and the worthiest chosen out of the unpretending multitude. Symmachus inseparably connected, in his Pagan patriotism, the ancient religion with the welfare of Rome. He mourned in bitter humiliation over the acts of Gratian,—the removal of the statue of Victory, the abrogation of the immunities of the Pagan priesthood. He hoped to obtain from the justice, or perhaps the fears, of the young Valentinian, that which had been

¹ This was called the *Annona*.

refused by Gratian. The senate met under his authority; a petition was drawn up and presented in the name of that venerable body to the emperor. On this composition Symmachus lavished all his eloquence. His oration is written with vigor, with dignity, with elegance. It is in this respect, perhaps, superior to the reply of St. Ambrose.¹ But in the feeble and apologetic tone we perceive at once that it is the artful defence of an almost hopeless cause; it is cautious to timidity, dexterous, elaborately conciliatory, moderate from fear of offending rather than from tranquil dignity. Ambrose, on the other hand, writes with all the fervid and careless energy of one confident in his cause, and who knows that he is appealing to an audience already pledged by their own feelings to his side; he has not to obviate objections, to reconcile difficulties, to sue or to propitiate; his contemptuous and criminating language has only to inflame zeal, to quicken resentment and scorn. He is flowing down on the full tide of human passion, and his impulse but accelerates and strengthens the rapid current.

The personification of Rome, in the address of Symmachus, is a bold stroke of artificial rhetoric, but it is artificial; and Rome pleads instead of commanding; entreats for indulgence, rather than menaces for neglect. "Most excellent princes, fathers of your country, respect my years, and permit me still

¹ Heyne has expressed himself strongly on the superiority of Symmachus. "Argumentorum delectu, vi, pondere, aculeis, non minus admirabilis illa est quam prudentiâ, cautione, ac verecundiâ; quam tanto magis sentias si verbosam et inanem, interdum calumniosam et veteratoriam declamationem Ambrosii compares." — Censur. ingen. et mor. Q. A. Symmachi, in Heyne Opuscul.

The relative position of the parties influenced, no doubt, the style, and will, perhaps, the judgment of posterity on the merit, of the compositions.

to practise the religion of my ancestors, in which I have grown old. Grant me but the liberty of living according to my ancient usage. This religion has subdued the world to my dominion; these rites repelled Hannibal from my walls, the Gauls from the capitol. Have I lived thus long, to be rebuked in my old age for my religion? It is too late: it would be discreditable to amend in my old age. I entreat but peace for the gods of Rome, the tutelary gods of our country." Rome condescends to that plea which a prosperous religion neither uses nor admits, but to which a falling faith always clings with desperate energy. "Heaven is above us all; we cannot all follow the same path; there are many ways by which we arrive at the great secret. But we presume not to contend: we are humble suppliants." The end of the third century had witnessed the persecutions of Diocletian: the fourth had not elapsed when this is the language of Paganism, uttered in her strongest hold by the most earnest and eloquent of her partisans. Symmachus remonstrates against the miserable economy of saving the maintenance of the Vestal virgins; the disgrace of enriching the imperial treasury by such gains; he protests against the confiscation of all legacies bequeathed to them by the piety of individuals. "Slaves may inherit: the Vestal virgins alone, and the ministers of religion, are precluded from this common privilege." The orator concludes by appealing to the deified father of the emperor, who looks down with sorrow from the starry citadel, to see that toleration violated which he had maintained with willing justice.

But Ambrose was at hand to confront the eloquent Pagan, and to prohibit the fatal concession. Far dif

ferent is the tone and manner of the Archbishop of Milan. He asserts, in plain terms, the unquestionable obligation of a Christian sovereign to permit no part of the public revenue to be devoted to the maintenance of idolatry. Their Roman ancestors were to be treated with reverence; but, in a question of religion, they were to consider God alone. He who advises such grants as those demanded by the suppliants is guilty of sacrifice. Gradually he rises to still more imperious language, and unveils all the terrors of the sacerdotal authority. "The emperor who shall be guilty of such concessions will find that the bishops will neither endure nor connive at his sin. If he enters a church, he will find no priest, or one who will defy his authority. The church will indignantly reject the gifts of him who has shared them with Gentile temples. The altar disdains the offerings of him who has made offerings to images. It is written, 'Man cannot serve two masters.'" Ambrose, emboldened, as it were, by his success, ventures in his second letter to treat the venerable and holy traditions of Roman glory with contempt. "How long did Hannibal insult the gods of Rome? It was the goose, and not the deity, that saved the capitol. Did Jupiter speak in the goose? Where were the gods in all the defeats, some of them but recent, of the Pagan emperors? Was not the altar of Victory then standing?" He insults the number, the weaknesses, the marriages, of the Vestal virgins. "If the same munificence were shown to Christian virgins, the beggared treasury would be exhausted by the claims." "Are not the baths, the porticos, the streets, still crowded with images? Must they still keep their place in the great council of the empire? You compel to worship if you

Reply of
Ambrose.

restore the altar. And who is this deity? Victory is a gift, and not a power; she depends on the courage of the legions, not on the influence of the religion,—a mighty deity, who is bestowed by the numbers of an army, or the doubtful issue of a battle!”

Foiled in argument, Paganism vainly grasped at other arms, which she had as little power to wield. On the murder of Valentinian, Arbogastes Murder of Valentinian, A.D. 392. the Gaul, whose authority over the troops was without competitor, hesitated to assume the purple, which had never yet been polluted by a barbarian. He placed Eugenius, a rhetorician, on the throne. The elevation of Eugenius was an act of military violence; but the Pagans of the West hailed his Accession of Eugenius. accession with the most eager joy and the fondest hopes. The Christian writers denounce the apostasy of Eugenius, not without justice if Eugenius ever professed Christianity.¹ Throughout Italy the temples were re-opened; the smoke of sacrifice ascended from all quarters; the entrails of victims were explored for the signs of victory. The frontiers were guarded by all the terrors of the old religion. The statue of Jupiter the Thunderer, sanctified by magical rites of the most awful significance, and placed on the fortifications amid the Julian Alps, looked defiance on the advance of the Christian emperor. The images of the gods were unrolled on the banners, and Hercules was borne in triumph at the head of the army. Ambrose fled from Milan; for the soldiery boasted that they would stable their horses in the churches, and press the clergy to fill their legions.

In Rome, Eugenius consented, without reluctance,

¹ Compare the letter of Ambrose to Eugenius. He addresses Eugenius apparently as a Christian, but one in the hands of more powerful Pagans

to the restoration of the altar of Victory ; but he had the wisdom to foresee the danger which his cause might incur by the resumption of the temple estates, many of which had been granted away : he yielded with undisguised unwillingness to the irresistible importunities of Arbogastes and Flavianus.

While this re-action was taking place in the West, perhaps irritated by the intelligence of this formidable conspiracy of Paganism, with the usurpation of the throne, Theodosius published in the East the last and most peremptory of those edicts which, gradually rising in the sternness of their language, proclaimed the ancient worship a treasonable and capital crime. In its minute and searching phrases, this statute seemed eagerly to pursue Paganism to its most secret and private lurking-places. Thenceforth no man of any station, rank, or dignity, in any place in any city, was to offer an innocent victim in sacrifice ; the more harmless worship of the household gods, which lingered, probably, more deeply in the hearts of the Pagans than any other part of their system, was equally forbidden,—not merely the smoke of victims, but even lamps, incense, and garlands. To sacrifice, or to consult the entrails of victims, was constituted high treason, and thereby a capital offence, although with no treasonable intention of calculating the days of the emperor. It was a crime of the same magnitude to infringe the laws of nature, to pry into the secrets of futurity, or to inquire concerning the death of any one. Whoever permitted any Heathen rite—hanging a tree with chaplets, or raising an altar of turf—forfeited the estate on which the offence was committed. Any house profaned with the smoke of incense was confiscated to the imperial exchequer. Whoever violated

this prohibition, and offered sacrifice either in a public temple or on the estate of another, was amerced in a fine of twenty-five pounds of gold ^{A.D. 394.} (a thousand pounds of our money); and whoever connived at the offence was liable to the same fine: the magistrate who neglected to enforce it, to a still heavier penalty.¹ This law, stern and intolerant as it was, spoke, no doubt, the dominant sentiment of the Christian world;² but its repetition by the successors of Theodosius, and the employment of avowed Pagans in many of the high offices of the state and army, may permit us charitably to doubt whether the exchequer was much enriched by the forfeitures, or the sword of the executioner deeply stained with the blood of conscientious Pagans. Polytheism boasted no martyrs; and we may still hope, that, if called upon to carry its own decrees into effect, its native clemency — though, unhappily, Christian bigotry had already tasted of heretical blood — would have revolted from the sanguinary deed,³ and yet have seen the inconsistency of these acts (which it justified in theory, on the authority of the Old Testament) with the vital principles of the Gospel.

The victory of Theodosius in the West dissipated at once the vain hopes of Paganism; the pageant vanished away. Rome heard of the triumph, perhaps

¹ Cod. Theod. xvi. 10, 12.

² Gibbon has quoted from Le Clerc a fearful sentence of St. Augustine, addressed to the Donatists. "*Quis nostrum, quis vestrum non laudat leges ab Imperatoribus datas adversus sacrificia Paganorum? Et certè longè ibi pœna severior constituta est; illius quippe impietatis capitale supplicium est.*" — Epist. xciii. But passages amiably inconsistent with this fierce tone might be quoted on the milder side. Compare Editor's note on Gibbon, v. p. 114.

³ "*Quis eorum comprehensus est in sacrificio (cum his legibus ista prohiberentur) et non negavit.*" — Augustin, in Psalm cxx., quoted by Gibbon from Lardner

witnessed the presence, of the great conqueror, who, in the East, had already countenanced the most destructive attacks against the temples of the gods. The Christian poet describes a solemn debate of the senate on the claims of Jupiter and of Christ to the adoration of the Roman people. According to his account, Jupiter was outvoted by a large number of suffrages; the decision was followed by a general desertion of their ancestral deities by the obsequious minority; the old hereditary names, the Annii and the Probi, the Anicii and Olybii, the Paulini and Bassi, the popular Gracchi, six hundred families, at once passed over to the Christian cause.¹ The Pagan historian to a certain degree confirms the fact of the deliberate discussion, but differs as to the result. The senate, he states, firmly, but respectfully, adhered to their ancient deities.² But the last argument of the Pagan advocates was fatal to their cause. Theodosius refused any longer to assign funds from the public revenue to maintain the charge of the idolatrous worship. The senate remonstrated, that, if they ceased to be supported at the national cost, they would cease to be national rites. This argument was more likely to confirm than to shake the determination of the Christian emperor. From this time, the temples were deserted; the priests and priestesses, deprived of their maintenance, were scattered abroad. The public temples still stood, nor was it forbidden to worship within their walls without sacrifice; the private and family or Gentile deities still preserved their influence.

¹ Sexcentas numerare domos de sanguine prisco
Nobilium licet, ad Christi signacula versas,
Turpis ab idoli vasto emersisse profundo.

Prud. ad Symmach.

Prudentius has probably amplified some considerable desertion of the wavering and dubious believers.

² Zosim. Hist. iv. 59.

Theodosius died the year after the defeat of Eugenius.

We pursue to its close the history of Western Paganism, which was buried at last in the ruins of the empire. Gratian had dissevered the supremacy of the national religion from the imperial dignity; he had confiscated the property of the temples; Theodosius had refused to defray the expense of public sacrifices from the public funds. Still, however, the outward form of Paganism remained. Some priest-hoods were still handed down in regular descent; the rites of various deities, even of Mythra and Cybele, were celebrated without sacrifice, or with sacrifice furtively performed; the corporation of the haruspices was not abolished. There still likewise remained a special provision for certain festivals and public amusements.¹ The expense of the sacred banquets and of the games was defrayed by the state; an early law of Honorius respected the common enjoyments of the people.²

The poem of Prudentius³ acknowledges that the enactments of Theodosius had been far from altogether successful;⁴ his bold assertion of the universal adoption of Christianity by the whole senate is in some degree contradicted by his admission that the old pestilence of idolatry had again broken out in Rome.⁵ It implies that the restoration of the statue of Victory had again been urged, and by the indefatigable Sym-

¹ It was called the *vectigal templorum*.

² "*Communis populi lætitia*."

³ The poem of Prudentius is by no means a recapitulation of the arguments of St. Ambrose; it is original, and in some parts very vigorous.

⁴ *Inclitus ergo parens patriæ, moderator et orbis,
Nil egit prohibendo, vagas ne pristinus error
Crederet esse Deum nigrante sub ære formas.*

⁵ *Sed quoniam renovata lues turbare salutem
Tentat Romulidum.*

machus, on the sons of Theodosius.¹ The poem was written after the battle of Pollentia, as it triumphantly appeals to the glories of that day against the argument

that Rome was indebted for the victories of former times to her ancient gods. It closes with an earnest admonition to the son of Theodosius to fulfil the task which was designedly left to him by the piety of his father ;² to suppress at once the Vestal virgins, and, above all, the gladiatorial shows, which they were accustomed to countenance by their presence.

In the year 408 came forth the edict which aimed at the direct and complete abolition of Paganism throughout the Western empire. The whole of this reserved provision for festivals was swept away ; it was devoted to the more useful purpose, — the pay of the loyal soldiery.³ The same edict proceeded to actual violence, to invade and take possession of the sanctuaries of religion. All images were to be thrown down ; the edifices, now useless and deserted, to be occupied by the imperial officers, and appropriated to useful purposes.⁴ The Government, wavering between

Law of
Honorius.

¹ *Armorum dominos, vernantes flore juventæ,
Inter castra patris genitos, sub imagine avitæ
Eductos, exempla domi congesta tenentes,
Orator catus instigat. . . .
Si vobis vel parta, viri, victoria cordi est,
Vel parienda dehinc, templum Dea virgo sacratum
Obtineat, vobis regnantibus.*

The orator catus is Symmachus ; the parta victoria, that of Pollentia ; the Dea virgo, Victory.

² *Quam tibi supplendam Deus, et genitoris amica
Servavit pietas : solus ne præmia tantæ
Virtutis caperet "partem, tibi, nate reservo,"
Dixit, et integrum decus intactumque reliquit. — Sub fin.*

³ "Expensis devotissimorum militum profutura."

⁴ Augustine (though not entirely consistent) disapproved of the forcible demolition of the temples. "Let us first extirpate the idolatry of the hearts of the Heathen ; and they will either themselves invite us, or anticipate us in the execution of this good work." — Tom. v. p. 62.

demolition and desecration, devised this plan for the preservation of these great ornaments of the cities, which thus, taken under the protection of the magistracy as public property, were secured from the destructive zeal of the more fanatical Christians. All sacrilegious rites, festivals, and ceremonies were prohibited. The bishops of the towns were invested with power to suppress these forbidden usages, and the civil authorities, as though the government mistrusted their zeal, were bound, under a heavy penalty, to obey the summons, and to assist the prelates in the extirpation of idolatry. Another edict excluded all enemies of the Christian faith from the great public offices in the state and in the army, and this, if fully carried into effect, would have transferred the whole power throughout the empire into the hands of the Christians. But the times were not yet ripe for this measure. Generides, a Pagan, in a high command in the army, threw up his commission. The edict was repealed.¹

¹ Prudentius ventures to admire the tolerant impartiality of Theodosius, in admitting both parties alike to civil and military honors. He urges this *argumentum ad hominem* against Symmachus:—

Denique pro meritis terrestribus æqua rependens
Munera, sacricolis summos impertit honores
Dux bonus, et certare sinit cum laude suorum.
Nec pago implicitos per debita culmina mundi
Ire vetat.
Ipse magistratum tibi consulis, ipse tribunal
Contulit.

In the East, the Pagan Themistius had been appointed Prefect of Constantinople by Theodosius. It is curious to read his flatteries of the orthodox Christian emperor; he praises his love of philosophy in the most fervent language.

The most remarkable instance of this inconsistency, at a much later period, occurs in the person of Merobaudes, a general and a poet, who flourished in the first half of the fifth century. A statue in honor of Merobaudes was placed in the Forum of Trajan, of which the inscription is still extant. Fragments of his poems have been discovered by the industry and sagacity of Niebuhr. In one passage, Merobaudes, in the genuine Heathen spirit, attributes the ruin of the empire to the abolition of Paganism, and almost

Rome once more beheld the shadow of a Pagan emperor, Attalus, while the Christian emperor maintained his court at Ravenna; and both stood trembling before the victorious Alaric. When that triumphant

A.D. 409. Goth formed the siege of Rome, Paganism, as if grateful for the fidelity of the imperial city, made one last desperate effort to avert the common ruin. Pagan magic was the last refuge of conscious weakness. The Etrurian soothsayers were called forth from their obscurity, with the concurrence of the whole city (the pope himself is said to have assented to the idolatrous ceremony), to blast the barbaric invader with the lightnings of Jupiter. The Christian historian saves the credit of his party, by asserting that they kept away from the profane rite.¹ But it may be doubted, after all, whether the ceremony really took place; both parties had more confidence in the power of a large sum of money, offered to arrest the career of the triumphant barbarian.

The impartial fury of Alaric fell alike on church and temple, on Christian and Pagan. But the capture renews the old accusation of atheism against Christianity. He impersonates some deity, probably Discord, who summons Bellona to take arms for the destruction of Rome; and, in a strain of fierce irony, recommends to her, among other fatal measures, to extirpate the gods of Rome:—

Roma, ipsique tremant furialia murmura reges.
 Jam superos terris, atque hospita numina pelle:
Romanos populare Deos, et nullus in aris
Vestæ exoratæ, fatus strue, palleat ignis.
 His instructa dolis palatia celsa subibo,
 Majorum mores, et pectora prisca fugabo
 Funditus, atque simul, nullo discrimine rerum,
 Spernantur fortes, nec sit reverentia justis.
 Attica neglecto pereat facundia Phœbo,
Indignis contingat honos, et pondera rerum;
 Non virtus sed casus agat, tristisque cupido;
 Pectoribus sævi demens furor æstuet ævi;
Omniaque hæc sine mente Jovis, sine numine summo.

Merobaudes in Niebuhr's edit. of the Byzantines.

¹ Zosimus, v. Sozomen, ix. 6. Compare Latin Christianity, vol. i. p. 94

ture of Rome consummated the ruin of Paganism. The temples, indeed, were for the most part left standing, but their worshippers had fled. Capture of Rome by Alarie. The Roman aristocracy, in whom alone Paganism still retained its most powerful adherents, abandoned the city, and, scattered in the provinces of the empire, were absorbed in the rapidly Christianizing population. The deserted buildings had now neither public authority nor private zeal and munificence to maintain them against the encroachments of time or accident, to support the tottering roof, or repair the broken column. There was neither public fund, nor private contribution, for their preservation, till at length the Christians, in many instances, took possession of the abandoned edifice, converted it to their own use, and hallowed it by a new consecration.¹ Thus, in many places, though marred and disfigured, the monuments of architecture survived, with no great violation of the ground plan, distribution, or general proportions.²

Paganism, was, in fact, left to die out by gradual dissolution.³ The worship of the Heathen deities lingered in many temples, till it was superseded by the new form of Christianity, which, at least in its

¹ There are many churches in Rome, which, like the Pantheon, are ancient temples: thirty-nine built on the foundations of temples. Four retain Pagan names, — S. Maria sopra Minerva, S. Maria Aventina, S. Lorenzo in Matuta, S. Stefano in Cacco. At Sienna, the temple of Quirinus became the church of S. Quirino. — Beugnot, ii. p. 266. See in Bingham, book viii. s. 4, references to several churches in the East converted into temples. But this passage must be read with caution.

² In some cases, by a more destructive appropriation, they converted the materials to their own use, and worked them up into their own barbarous churches.

³ The fifth council of Carthage (A.D. 398), can. xv., petitioned the most glorious emperors to destroy the remains of idolatry, not merely "in simulacris," but in other places, groves, and trees.

outward appearance, approximated to Polytheism: the Virgin gradually supplanted many of the local deities. In Sicily, which long remained obstinately wedded to the ancient faith, eight celebrated temples were dedicated to the Mother of God.¹ It was not till the seventh century, that the Pantheon was dedicated by Pope Boniface IV. to the Holy Virgin. Of the public festivals, the last which clung with tenacious grasp to the habits of the Roman people, was the Lupercalia.

A.D. 493. It was suppressed towards the close of the fifth century by Pope Gelasius. The rural districts were not completely Christianized until the general introduction of monasticism. Heathenism was still prevalent in many parts of Italy, especially in the neighborhood of Turin, in the middle of the fifth century.² Its conqueror was the missionary from the convent who wandered through the villages, or who, from his monastery, regularly discharged the duties of a village pastor. St. Benedict of Nursia destroyed the worship of Apollo on Mount Casino.³

Everywhere the superstition survived the religion, and that which was unlawful under Paganism, continued to be unlawfully practised under Christianity. The insatiable propensity of men to inquire into futurity, and to deal with secret and invisible agencies, which reason condemns, and often, while it condemns,

¹ Beugnot, ii. 271; from Aprile, *Chronologia Universale de Siciliâ*.

² See the sermons of Maximus, Bishop of Turin, quoted in Beugnot, *ib.* 253.

³ Greg. M. Dialog., lib. 2, p. 262. He converted many worshippers of idols in a village near his monastery. *Ibid.*, ch. xix. 60, he mentions *idolorum cultores* in an epistle to the Bishop of Tyndaris in Sicily. So in Sardinia, iii. 23 and 26. The peasants belonging to the church were to be heavily taxed till they ceased to Paganize; also he names twenty-nine worshippers of trees, &c., near Terracina. — vii. 20. Idolatrous Aruspices and Sortilegi in Sardinia to be preached to; if obstinate, slaves to be scourged, free men imprisoned till they repent. — vii. 2, 67.

consults, retained its old formularies, some religious, some pretending to be magical or theurgic. Divination and witchcraft have never been extinct in Italy, or, perhaps, in any part of Europe. The descendants of Canidia or Erictho, the seer and the magician, have still practised their arts, to which the ignorant, including at times all mankind, have listened with unabated credulity.

We must resume our consideration of Paganizing Christianity, as the parent of Christian art and poetry, and, in fact, as the ruler of the human mind for many ages.

CHAPTER IX.

Theodosius. Triumph of Trinitarianism. The great Prelates
of the East.

BUT the unity, no less than the triumph, of Christianity occupied the vigorous mind of Theodosius. He had been anticipated in this design in the West by his feeble predecessors and his colleagues, Gratian and Valentinian the younger. The laws began to speak the language not only of the exclusive establishment of Christianity, but of Christianity under one rigorous and unaccommodating creed and discipline. Almost the first act of Theodosius was the edict for the universal acceptance of the Catholic faith.¹ It appeared under the name, and with the conjoint authority of the three emperors, Gratian, Valentinian II., and Theodosius. It was addressed to the inhabitants of Constantinople. "We, the three emperors, *will* that all our subjects follow the religion taught by St. Peter to the Romans, professed by those saintly prelates, Damasus Pontiff of Rome, and Peter Bishop of Alexandria, that we believe the one divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of majesty co-equal, in the Holy Trinity. We *will* that those who embrace this creed be called Catholic Christians; we brand all the senseless followers of other religions by the infamous name of heretics, and forbid their conventicles to assume the

Orthodoxy of
Theodosius.

Laws against
heretics.
A.D. 380.

¹ Codex Theodos. xvi. 1, 2.

name of churches; we reserve their punishment to the vengeance of Heaven, and to such measures as divine inspiration shall dictate to us.”¹ Thus the religion of the whole Roman world was enacted by two feeble boys, and a rude Spanish soldier.² The next year witnessed the condemnation of all heretics, particularly the Photinians, Arians, and Eunomians, and the expulsion of the Arians from the churches of all the cities in the East,³ and their surrender to the only *lawful* form of Christianity. On the assembling of the council of Chalcedon, two severe laws were issued against apostates and Manicheans, prohibiting them from making wills. During its sitting, the emperor promulgated an edict, prohibiting the Arians from building churches either in the cities or in the country, under pain of the confiscation of the funds devoted to the purpose.⁴

The circumstances of the times happily coincided with the design of Theodosius to concentrate the whole Christian world into one vigorous and consistent system. The more legitimate influence of argument and intellectual and religious superiority concurred with the stern mandates of the civil power. All the great and commanding minds of the age were on the same side as to the momentous and strongly agitated questions of the faith. The productive energies of Arianism

All the more powerful ecclesiastical writers favorable to Trinitarianism.

¹ “Post etiam motus nostri, quem ex cœlesti arbitrio sumpserimus, ultione plectendos.” Godefroy supposes these words not to mean “cœlesti oraculum,” but “Dei arbitrium, regulam et formulam juris divini.”

² Baronius, and even Godefroy, call this law a golden, pious, and wholesome statute. Happily it was on the right side.

³ On the accession of Theodosius, according to Sozomen, the Arians possessed all the churches of the East, except Jerusalem. — H. E. vii. 2.

⁴ Sozomen mentions these severe laws; but asserts that they were enacted merely *in terrorem*, and with no design of carrying them into execution. — H. E. vii. 12.

seemed, as it were, exhausted; its great defenders had passed away, and left, apparently, no heirs to their virtues or abilities. It was distracted with schisms, and had to bear the unpopularity of the sects, which seemed to have sprung from it in the natural course, the Eunomians, Macedonians, and a still multiplying progeny of heresies. Everywhere the Trinitarian prelates rose to ascendancy, not merely from the support of the government, but from their pre-eminent character or intellectual powers. Each province seemed to have produced some man adapted to the particular period and circumstances of the time, who devoted himself to the establishment of the orthodox opinions. The intractable Egypt, more especially turbulent Alexandria, was ruled by the strong arm of the bold and unprincipled Theophilus. The dreamy mysticism of Syria found a congenial representative in St. Ephrem. A more intellectual, yet still somewhat imaginative, Orientalism animates the writings of St. Basil; in a less degree, those of Gregory of Nazianzum; still less, those of Gregory of Nyssa. The more powerful and Grecian eloquence of Chrysostom swayed the popular mind in Constantinople. Jerome, a link, as it were, between the East and the West, transplanted the monastic spirit and opinions of Syria into Rome; and brought into the East much of the severer thought, and more prosaic reasoning, of the Latin world. In Gaul, where Hilary of Poitiers had long maintained the cause of Trinitarianism, on the borders of civilization, St. Martin of Tours acted the part of a bold and enterprising missionary; while in Milan, the court-capital of the West, the strong practical character of Ambrose, his sternly conscientious moral energy, though hardening

at times into rigid intolerance, with the masculine strength of his style, confirmed the Latin church in that creed to which Rome had adhered with almost unshaken fidelity. If not the greatest, the most permanently influential of all, Augustine, united the intense passion of the African mind with the most comprehensive and systematic views and intrepid dogmatism on the darkest subjects. United in one common cause, acting in their several quarters according to their peculiar temperaments and characters, these strong-minded and influential ecclesiastics almost compelled the world into a temporary peace, till first Pelagianism, and afterwards Nestorianism, unsettled again the restless elements; the controversies, first in the West concerning grace, free-will, and predestination, then in the East on the Incarnation and two natures of Christ, succeeded to the silenced and exhausted feud concerning the Trinity of persons in the Godhead.

Theophilus of Alexandria¹ performed his part in the complete subjection of the world by his energy as a ruler, not by the slower and more legitimate influence of moral persuasion through his preaching or his writings.² He suppressed Arianism by the same violent and coercive means with which he extirpated Paganism. The tone of this prelate's epistles is invariably harsh and criminatory. He appears in the best light as opposing the vulgar anthropomorphism of the monks in the neighborhood of Alexandria, and insisting on the pure spiritual nature of the Deity. Yet he condescended to

Theophilus of
Alexandria,
bishop, from
385 to 412.

¹ I have not placed these writers in their strict chronological order, but according to the countries in which they lived.

² The Trinitarian doctrines had been maintained in Alexandria by the virtues and abilities of Didymus the Blind.

appease these turbulent adversaries by an unmanly artifice. He consented to condemn the doctrines of Origen, who, having reposed quietly in his tomb for many years, in general respect, if not in the odor of sanctity, was exhumed, as it were, by the zeal of later times, as a dangerous heresiarch. The Oriental doctrines with which Origen had impregnated his system were unpopular, and perhaps not clearly understood.¹ The notion that the reign of Christ was finite was rather an inference from his writings than a tenet of Origen; for, if all bodies were to be finally annihilated (according to his anti-materialistic system), the humanity of Christ, and consequently his personal reign, must cease. The possibility that the Devil might, after long purification, be saved, and the corruptibility of the body after the resurrection, grew out of the same Oriental cast of opinions. But the perfectly pure and immaterial nature of the Deity was the tenet of Origen which was the most odious to the monks; and Theophilus, by anathematizing Origenism in the mass, while he himself held certainly the sublimest, but to his adversaries most objectionable part of the system, adopted a low and undignified deception. The persecution of Isidore, and the heads of the monasteries who befriended his cause (the tall brethren, as they were called), from personal motives of animosity, display the Alexandrian prelate in his ordinary character. We shall again encounter Theophilus in the lamentable intrigues against the advancement and influence of Chrysostom.

The character of Ephrem² the Syrian was the exact counterpart to that of the busy and worldly Theophilus. A native of Nisibis, or rather of

St. Ephrem
the Syrian,
died 379.

¹ Socrates, vi. 10. Sozomen, viii. 13.

² See the Life of Ephrem prefixed to his works, and in Tillemont.

its neighborhood, Ephrem passed the greater part of his life at Edessa, and in the monastic establishments which began to abound in Mesopotamia and Syria, as in Egypt. His genius was that of the people in whose language he wrote his numerous compositions in prose and verse.¹ In Ephrem something of the poetic mysticism of the Gnostic was allied with the most rigid orthodoxy of doctrine. But with his imaginative turn were mingled a depth and intensity of feeling, which gave him his peculiar influence over the kindred minds of his countrymen. Tears were as natural to him as perspiration; day and night, in his devout seclusion, he wept for the sins of mankind and for his own; his very writings, it was said, weep; there is a deep and latent sorrow even in his panegyrics or festival homilies.²

Ephrem was a poet; and his hymns, poured forth in the prodigality of his zeal, succeeded at length in entirely disenchanting the popular ear from the heretical strains of Bardesanes and his son Harmonius, which lingered after the general decay of Gnosticism.³ The hymns of Ephrem were sung on the festivals of the martyrs. His psalms, the constant occupation which he enjoins upon his monkish companions, were always of a sorrowful and contrite tone. Laughter was the source and the indication of all wickedness, sorrow of all virtue. During the melancholy psalm,

¹ According to Theodoret, he was unacquainted with Greek. Παιδείας γὰρ οὐ γεγενημένος ἑλληνικῆς, τοὺς τε πολυσχιδεῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων διήλεγξε πλάνους καὶ πάσης αἰρετικῆς κακοτεχνίας ἐγύμνωσε τὴν ἀσθένειαν. The refutation of Greek heresy in Syriac must have been curious.

² See the two treatises in his works, vol. i. 104-107. "Non esse ridendum sed lugendum potius atque plorandum;" and, "Quod ludicris rebus abstinendum sit Christianis."

³ Theodoret, iv. 29.

God was present with his angels: all more joyous strains belonged to heathenism and idolatry.

The monasticism, as well as the Trinitarianism, of Syria received a strong impulse from Ephrem; and in Syria monasticism began to run into its utmost extravagance. There was one class of ascetics who, at certain periods, forsook their cities, and retired to the mountains to browse on the herbage which they found, as their only food. The writings of Ephrem were the occupation and delight of all these gentle and irreproachable fanatics; and, as Ephrem was rigidly Trinitarian, he contributed to fix the doctrinal language of the various cœnobitic institutions and solitary hermitages. In fact, the quiescent intellect probably rejoiced in being relieved from these severe and ungrateful inquiries; and, full freedom being left to the imagination and ample scope to the language in the vague and fervent expressions of divine love, the Syrian mind felt not the restriction of the rigorous creed, and passively surrendered itself to ecclesiastical authority. Absorbed in its painful and melancholy struggles with the internal passions and appetites, it desired not to provoke, but rather to repress, the dangerous activity of the reason. The orthodoxy of Ephrem himself savors perhaps of timidity and the disinclination to agitate such awful and appalling questions. He would elude and escape them, and abandon himself altogether to the more edifying emotions which it is the chief object of his writings to excite and maintain. The dreamer must awake in order to reason, and he prefers the passive tranquillity of the half-slumbering state.

Greece, properly so called, contributed none of the more distinguished names in Eastern Christianity. Even the Grecian part of Asia Minor was by no means

fertile in names which survive in the annals of the Church. In Athens, philosophy still lingered, and struggled to maintain its predominance. Many of the more eminent ecclesiastics had visited its schools in their youth, to obtain those lessons of rhetoric and profane knowledge which they were hereafter to dedicate to their own sacred uses. But they were foreigners; and, in the old language of Greece, would have been called barbarians.

The rude and uncivilized Cappadocia gave birth to Basil and the two Gregories. The whole of the less dreamy and still active and commercial part of Asia was influenced by Basil, on whose character and writings his own age lavished the most unbounded praise. The name of Basil is constantly united with those of the two Gregories. One, Gregory of Nyssa, was his brother; the other, named from his native town of Nazianzum, of which his father was bishop, was the intimate friend of his boyhood and of his later years. The language, the eloquence, the opinions, of these writers retain, in different degrees, some tinge of Asiatic coloring. Far more intelligible and practical than the mystic strains and passionate homilies of Ephrem, they delight in agitating, though in a more modest spirit, the questions which had inflamed the imagination of the Gnostics. But with them, likewise, inquiry proceeds with cautious and reverent steps. On these subjects they are rigorously orthodox, and assert the exclusive doctrines of Athanasius with the most distinct and uncompromising energy. Basil maintained the cause of Trinitarianism with unshaken fidelity during its days of depression and adversity. His friend Gregory of Nazianzum lived to witness and bear a great part of its triumph.

Both Basil and Gregory were ardent admirers, and in themselves transcendent models, of the more monastic Christianity. The influence of Basil crowded that part of Asia with cœnobitic institutions: but in his monasteries labor and useful industry prevailed to a greater extent than in the Syrian deserts.

Basil was a native of the Cappadocian Cæsarea.¹ He was an hereditary Christian. His grandfather had retired during the Diocletian persecution to a mountain-forest in Pontus. His father was a man of estimation as a lawyer, possessed considerable property, and was remarkable for his personal beauty. His mother, in person and character, was worthy of her husband. The son of such parents received the best education which could be bestowed on a Christian youth. Having exhausted the instruction to be obtained in his native city of Cæsarea, he went to Constantinople, where he is reputed to have studied the art of rhetoric under the celebrated Libanius. But Athens was still the centre of liberal education; and, with other promising youths from the Eastern provinces, Basil and his friend Gregory resided for some time in that city. But, with all his taste for letters and eloquence (and Basil always spoke even of profane learning with generous respect, far different from the tone of contempt and animosity expressed by some writers), Christianity was too deeply rooted in his heart to be endangered either by the studies or the society of Athens. On his return to Cæsarea, he embraced the ascetic faith of the times with more than ordinary fervor. He abandoned his property; he practised such severe austerities as to injure his health, and to reduce his bodily form to the extreme

¹ Life of Basil, prefixed to his works; and Tillemont, Vie de S. Basile.

of meagreness and weakness. He was "without wife, without property, without flesh, almost without blood." He fled into the desert; his fame collected, as it were, a city around him; he built a monastery, and monasteries sprang up on every side. Yet the opinions of Basil concerning the monastic life were far more moderate and practical than the wilder and more dreamy asceticism which prevailed in Egypt and in Syria. He admired and persuaded his followers to cœnobitic, not to eremitical, life. It was the life of the industrious religious community, not of the indolent and solitary anchorite, which to Basil was the perfection of Christianity. All ties of kindred were, indeed, to give place to that of spiritual association. He that loves a brother in blood more than a brother in the religious community is still a slave to his carnal nature.¹ The indiscriminate charity of these institutions was to receive orphans of all classes for education and maintenance, but other children only with the consent or at the request of parents, certified before witnesses; and vows of virginity were by no means to be enforced upon these youthful pupils.² Slaves who fled to the monasteries were to be admonished, and sent back to their owners. There is one reservation, that slaves were not bound to obey their master, if he should order what is contrary to the laws of God.³ Industry was to be the animating principle of these settlements. Prayer and psalmody were to have their appointed hours, but by no means to intrude upon those devoted to useful labor. These labors were strictly defined,—such as were of real use to the community, not those which might contribute to vice or luxury. Agricul-

¹ Basil. Opera, ii. 325. Sermo Asceticus.

² Basil. Opera, ii. 355. ³ Basil. Opera, ii. 357.

ture was especially recommended. The life was in no respect to be absorbed in a perpetual mystic communion with the Deity.

Basil lived in his monastic retirement during a great part of the triumphant period of Arianism in the East ;

but, during the reign of Valens, he was re-

A.D. 366.

See chap. vii.

p. 49.

A.D. 370.

called to Cæsarea, to be the champion of Trinitarianism against the emperor and his

Arian partisans. The firmness of Basil, as we have seen, commanded the respect even of his ad-

versaries. In the midst of the raging controversy, he was raised to the archepiscopal throne of Cæsarea.

He governed the see with activity and diligence: not only the influence of his writings, but his actual

authority (his pious ambition of usefulness induced him perhaps to overstep the limits of his diocese), ex-

tended beyond Cappadocia, into Armenia and parts of Asia Minor. He was the firm supporter of the Nicene

Trinitarianism, but did not live to behold its

A.D. 379.

final triumph. His decease followed immediately upon the defeat and death of Valens.

The style of Basil did no discredit to his Athenian education; in purity and perspicuity he surpasses most of the Heathen as well as the Christian writers of his age.

Gregory of Nazianzum, as he shared the friendship,

Gregory of
Nazianzum.

so he has constantly participated in the fame, of Basil. He was born in a village, Arianza,

within the district of Nazianzum: his father was bishop of that city.¹ With Basil he passed a part of his youth

at Athens, and predicted, according to his own account,

¹ Tillemont is grievously embarrassed by the time of Gregory's birth. The stubborn dates insist upon his having been born after his father had attained the episcopate. Tillemont is forced to acknowledge the laxity of ecclesiastical discipline on this head, at this period of the Church.

the apostasy of Julian, from the observation of his character, and even of his person. Gregory is his own biographer: one or rather two His poems. poems, the first consisting of above two thousand iambs, the second of hexameters, describe the whole course of his early life. But Grecian poetry was not to be awakened from its long slumber by the voice of a Christian poet: it was faithful to its ancient source of inspiration. Christian thoughts and images will not blend with the language of Homer and the tragedians. Yet the autobiographical poems of Gregory illustrate a remarkable peculiarity which distinguishes modern and Christian from the older, more particularly the Grecian, poetry. In the Grecian poetry, as in Grecian life, the public absorbed the individual character. The person of the poet rarely appears, unless occasionally as the poet, as the objective author or reciter, not as the subject of the poem. The elegiac poets of Greece, if we may judge from Characteristic difference between Greek and Christian poetry. the few surviving fragments, and the amatory writers of Rome, speak in their proper persons, utter their individual thoughts, and embody their peculiar feelings. In the shrewd common-life view of Horace, and, indeed, in some of his higher lyric poetry, the poet is more prominent; and the fate of Ovid, one day basking in the imperial favor, the next, for some mysterious offence, banished to the bleak shores of the Euxine, seemed to give him the privilege of dwelling upon his own sorrows: his strange fate invested his life in peculiar interest. These, however, are rare and exceptional instances in Greek and Roman poetry. But by the Christian scheme, the individual man has assumed a higher importance; his actions, his opinions, the emotions of his mind, as connected

with his immortal state, have acquired a new and commanding interest, not only to himself, but to others. The poet profoundly scrutinizes and elaborately reveals the depths of his moral being. The psychological history of the man, in all its minute particulars, becomes the predominant matter of the poem. In this respect, these autobiographical poems of Gregory,

Value of Gregory's. loose as they are in numbers, spun out with a wearisome and garrulous mediocrity, and wanting that depth and passion of religion which has made the Confessions of Augustine one of the most permanently popular of Christian writings, possess nevertheless some interest, as indicating the transition state in poetry, as well as illustrating the thought and feeling prevalent among the Christian youth of the period. The one great absorbing question was the comparative excellence of the secular and the monastic life, the state of marriage or of virginity. The enthusiasm of the East scarcely deigned to submit this point to discussion. In one of Gregory's poems, Marriage and Virginity each pleads his cause; but there can be no doubt, from the first, to which will be assigned the victory. The Saviour gives to Virginity the place of honor on his right hand. Gregory had never entangled himself with marriage, that fatal tie which enthralls the soul in the bonds of matter. For him silken robes, gorgeous banquets, splendid palaces, music and perfumes, had no charm. He disregarded wealth, and feasted contentedly on bread with a little salt, and water for his only drink. The desire of supporting the declining age of his parents thwarted his holy ambition of withdrawing from all worldly intercourse; but this became a snare. He was embarrassed by refractory servants, by public and private business. The death

of his brother involved him still more inextricably in affairs arising out of his contested property. But the faithless friendship of Basil, which he deploras in the one touching passage of his whole poem,¹ still further endangered his peace. In the zeal of Basil to fill the bishoprics of his metropolitan diocese, calculating perhaps that Gregory, like himself, would generously sacrifice the luxury of religious quietude for the more useful duties of a difficult active position, he imposed upon his reluctant friend the charge of the newly created see of Sasima. This was a small and miserable town, at the meeting of three roads, in a country at once arid, marshy, and unwholesome, noisy and dusty from the constant passage of travellers, the disputes with extortionate custom-house officers, and all the tumult and drunkenness belonging to a town inhabited by loose and passing strangers. With Basil, Gregory had passed the tranquil days of his youth, the contemplative period of his manhood; together they had studied at Athens, together they had twice retired to monastic solitude; and this was the return for his long and tried attachment? Gregory, in the bitterness of his remonstrance, at one time assumes the language of an Indian faquir. Instead of rejoicing in the sphere opened to his activity,

Gregory,
Bishop of
Sasima.
A.D. 372.

¹ Gibbon's selection of this passage, and his happy illustration from Shakespeare, do great credit to his poetical taste:—

Πόνοι κοῖνοι λόγων

‘Ομόστεγός τε, καὶ συνέστιος βίος,

Νοῦς εἰς ἐν ἀμφοῖν . . .

Δισκοδασταί πάντα, καὶ ῥίπται χαμαί,

Αὔραι φέρουσι τὰς παλαιὰς ἐλπίδας.

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,

The sisters' vows, &c.

Helena, in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

See Gibbon, c. xxvi. vol. v. p. 18.

he boldly asserts his supreme felicity to be total inaction.¹ He submitted with the strongest repugnance to the office, and abandoned it, almost immediately, on the first opposition. He afterwards administered the see of Nazianzum under his father, and even after his father's decease, without assuming the episcopal title.

But Gregory was soon compelled by his own fame for eloquence and for orthodoxy to move in a more arduous and tumultuous sphere. For forty years Arianism had been dominant in Constantinople. The Arians mocked at the small number which still lingered in the single religious assemblage of the Athanasian party.² Gregory is constrained to admit this humiliating fact, and indignantly inquires, whether the sands are more precious than the stars of heaven, or the pebbles than pearls, because they are more numerous.³ But the accession of Theodosius opened a new era to the Trinitarians. The religion of the emperor would no longer condescend to this humble and secondary station. Gregory was invited to take charge of the small community which was still faithful to the doctrines of Athanasius. Gregory was already bowed with age and infirmity; his bald head stooped to his bosom; his countenance was worn by his austerities and his inward spiritual conflicts, when he reluctantly sacrificed his peace for this great purpose.⁴ The Catholics had no church; they met in a small house, on the site of which afterwards arose the celebrated church of St. Anastasia. The eloquence of Gregory wrought wonders in the busy and versatile capital. The Arians themselves

Gregory,
Bishop of
Constanti-
nople.

From A.D.
339 to 379.

¹ Ἐμοὶ δὲ μέγιστη πρᾶξις ἐστὶν ἡ ἀπραξία. — Epist. xxiii. p. 727.

² In the reign of Valentinian, they met ἐν μικρῷ οἰκίῳ. — Socrates, iv. 1.

³ Orat. xxv. p. 481.

⁴ Tillemont, art. xlvi.

crowded to hear him. His adversaries were reduced to violence; the Anastasia was attacked; the Arian monks, and even the virgins, mingled in the furious fray: many lives were lost, and Gregory was accused as the cause of the tumult. His innocence, and the known favor of the emperor, secured his acquittal; his eloquence was seconded by the imperial edicts. The law had been promulgated which denounced as heretics all who rejected the Nicene Creed.

The influence of Gregory was thwarted, and his peace disturbed, by the strange intrigues of one Maximus to possess himself of the episcopal throne of Constantinople. Maximus was called the Cynic, from his attempt to blend the rude manners, the coarse white dress, his enemies added, the vices, of that sect, with the profession of Christianity. His memory is loaded with every kind of infamy; yet, by dexterous flattery and assiduous attendance on the sermons of Gregory, he had stolen into his unsuspecting confidence, and received his public commendations in a studied oration.¹ Constantinople and Gregory himself were suddenly amazed with the intelligence that Maximus had been consecrated the Catholic bishop of the city. This extraordinary measure had been taken by seven Alexandrians of low birth and character,² with some bishops deputed by Peter, the orthodox Archbishop of Alexandria.³ A number of mariners,

¹ The panegyric on the philosopher Heron.

² Some of their names were whimsically connected with the Egyptian mythology. — Ammon, Anubis, and Hermanubis.

³ The interference of the Egyptians is altogether remarkable. Could there be a design to establish the primacy of Alexandria over Constantinople, and so over the East? It is observable, that, in his law, Theodosius names, as the examples of doctrine, the Bishop of Rome in the West, of Alexandria in the East. The intrigues of Theophilus against Chrysostom rather confirm this notion of an attempt to erect an Eastern papacy.

probably belonging to the corn fleet, had assisted at the ceremony, and raised the customary acclamations. A great tumult of all orders arose; all rushed to the church, from which Maximus and his party withdrew, and hastily completed a kind of tonsure (for the Cynic prided himself on his long hair) in the private dwelling of a flute-player. Maximus seems to have been rejected with indignation by the Athanasians of Constantinople, who adhered with unshaken fidelity to Gregory; he fled to the court of Theodosius, but the earliest measure adopted by the emperor to restore strength to the orthodox party was the rejection of the intrusive prelate.

24th Nov.
A.D. 380. The first act of Theodosius, on his arrival at Constantinople, was to issue an edict, expelling the Arians from the churches, and summoning Demophilus, the Arian bishop, to conform to the Nicene doctrine. Demophilus refused. The emperor commanded that those who would not unite to establish Christian peace should retire from the houses of Christian prayer. Demophilus assembled his followers, and, quoting the words of the Gospel, "If you are persecuted in one city, flee unto another," retired before the irresistible authority of the emperor. The next step was the appointment of the reluctant Gregory to the see, and his enthronization in the principal church of the metropolis. Environed by the armed legionaries, in military pomp, accompanied by the emperor himself, Gregory, amazed and bewildered, and perhaps sensible of the incongruity of the scene with the true Christian character, headed the triumphal procession. All around he saw the sullen and menacing faces of the Arian multitude, and his ear might catch their suppressed murmurs; even the heavens, for the morning

was bleak and cloudy, seemed to look down with cold indifference on the scene. No sooner, however, had Gregory, with the emperor, passed the rails which divided the sanctuary from the nave of the church, than the sun burst forth in his splendor, the clouds were dissipated, and the glorious light came streaming in upon the applauding congregation. At once a shout of acclamation demanded the enthronization of Gregory.

But Gregory, commanding only in his eloquence from the pulpit, seems to have wanted the firmness and vigor necessary for the prelate of a great metropolis. Theodosius summoned the council of Constantinople; and Gregory, embarrassed by the multiplicity of affairs, harassed by objections to the validity of his own election, entangled in the feuds which arose out of the contested election to the see of Antioch, entreated, and obtained, apparently the unreluctant assent of the bishops and the emperor to abdicate his dignity, and to retire to his beloved privacy. His retreat, in some degree disturbed by the interest which he still took in the see of Nazianzum, gradually became more complete, till, at length, he withdrew into solitude, and ended his days in that peace, which perhaps was not less sincerely enjoyed from his experience of the cares and vexations of worldly dignity. Arianza, his native village, was the place of his seclusion; the gardens, the trees, the fountain, familiar to his youth, welcomed his old age. But Gregory had not exhausted the fears, the dangers, or the passions of life. The desires of youth still burned in his withered body, and demanded the severest macerations. The sight or even the neighborhood of females afflicted his sensitive conscience; and, instead of allowing ease

or repose to his aged frame, his bed was a hard mat, his coverlid sackcloth, his dress one thin tunic; his feet were bare; he allowed himself no fire; and here, in the company of the wild beasts, he prayed with bitter tears, he fasted, and devoted his hours to the composition of poetry, which, from its extreme difficulty, he considered as an act of penitence. His painful existence was protracted to the age of ninety.

The complete restoration of Constantinople to the orthodox communion demanded even more powerful eloquence, and far more vigorous authority, than that of Gregory. If it was not finally achieved, its success was secured, by the most splendid orator who had ever adorned the Eastern church. Sixteen years after the retirement of Gregory, the fame of Chrysostom designated him as the successor to that important dignity.

Chrysostom was the model of a preacher for a great capital.¹ Clear rather than profound, his dogmatic is essentially moulded up with his moral teaching. He is the champion, not so exclusively of any system of doctrines, as of Christian holiness against the vices, the dissolute manners, the engrossing love of amusement, which prevailed in the new Rome of the East. His doctrines flow naturally from his subject or from the passage of Scripture under discussion; his illustrations are copious and happy; his style free and fluent; while he is an unrivalled master in that rapid and forcible application of incidental occurrences, which gives such life and reality to eloquence. He is at times, in the highest sense, dramatic in his manner.

Chrysostom, like all the more ardent spirits of his

¹ Compare the several lives of Chrysostom by Palladius, that in the Benedictine edition of his works, and in Tillemont. I have only the first volume of Neander's *Joannes Chrysostomus*. The second has since appeared.

age, was enamoured in his early youth of monasticism. But this he had gradually thrown off, even while he remained at Antioch. Though by no means formally abandoning these principles, or lowering his admiration of this imaginary perfection of religion, in his later works he is more free, popular, and practical. His ambition is not so much to elevate a few enthusiastic spirits to a high-toned and mystic piety, as to impregnate the whole population of a great capital with Christian virtue and self-denial.

John, who obtained the name of Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, was born at Antioch, about the year 347. He was brought up by his mother in the Christian faith; he studied rhetoric under the celebrated Libanius, who used his utmost arts, and displayed all that is captivating in Grecian poetry and philosophy, to enthrall the imagination of his promising pupil. Libanius, in an extant epistle, rejoices at the success of Chrysostom at the bar in Antioch. He is said to have lamented on his death-bed the sacrilegious seduction of the young orator by the Christians; for to Chrysostom he had intended to bequeath his school and the office of maintaining the dignity of Paganism.

But the eloquence of Chrysostom was not to waste itself in the barren litigations of the courts of justice in Antioch, or in the vain attempt to infuse new life into the dead philosophy and religion of Greece. He felt himself summoned to a nobler field. At the age of eighteen, Chrysostom began to study that one source of eloquence to which the human heart responded, — the sacred writings of the Christians. The church was not slow in recognizing the value of such a proselyte. He received the strongest encourage-

ment from Meletius, Bishop of Antioch; he was appointed a reader in the church. But the soul of Chrysostom was not likely to embrace these stirring tenets with coolness or moderation. A zealous friend inflamed, by precept and emulation, the fervor of his piety: they proposed to retire to one of the most remote hermitages in Syria; and the great Christian orator was almost self-doomed to silence, or to exhaust his power of language in prayers and ejaculations heard by no human ear. The mother of Chrysostom saved the Christian Church from this fatal loss. There is something exquisitely touching in the traits of domestic affection which sometimes gleam through the busy pages of history. His mother had become a widow at the age of twenty; to the general admiration, she had remained faithful to the memory of her husband and to her maternal duties. As soon as she heard the determination of her son to retire to a distant region (Chrysostom himself relates the incident), she took him by the hand, she led him to her chamber, she made him sit by her on the bed in which she had borne him, and burst out into tears and into language more sad than tears. She spoke of the cares and troubles of widowhood; grievous as they had been, she had ever one consolation,—the gazing on his face, and beholding in him the image of his departed father. Before he could speak, he had thus been her comfort and her joy. She reminded him of the fidelity with which she had administered the paternal property. “Think not that I would reproach you with these things. I have but one favor to entreat,—make me not a second time a widow; awaken not again my slumbering sorrows. Wait, at least, for my death: perhaps I shall depart before long. When you have

laid me in the earth, and re-united my bones to those of your father, then travel wherever thou wilt, even beyond the sea ; but, as long as I live, endure to dwell in my house, and offend not God by afflicting your mother, who is at least blameless towards thee.”¹

Whether released by the death of his mother, or hurried away by the irresistible impulse which would not allow him to withhold himself from what he calls “the true philosophy,” Chrysostom, some years afterwards, entered into one of the monasteries in the neighborhood of Antioch. He had hardly escaped the episcopal dignity, which was almost forced upon him by the admirers of his early piety. Whether he considered this gentle violence lawful to compel devout Christians to assume awful dignity, he did not hesitate to practise a pious fraud on his friend Basilus, with whom he promised to submit to consecration. Basilus found himself a bishop, but looked in vain for his treacherous friend who had deceived him into this momentous step, but deserted him at the appointed hour.

But the voice of Chrysostom was not doomed to silence even in his seclusion. The secession of so many of the leading youths from the duties of civil life, from the municipal offices and the service of the army, had awakened the jealousy of the Government. Valens issued his edict against those “followers of idleness.”² The monks were, in some instances, assailed by popular outrage ; parents, against whose approbation their children had deserted their homes and retired into the desert, appealed to the imperial

¹ M. Villemain, in his *Essai sur l'Eloquence Chrétienne dans le Quatrième Siècle*, has pointed out the exquisite simplicity and tenderness of this passage. — *De Sacerdotio*, i.

² *Ignaviæ sectatores*.

authority to maintain their own. Chrysostom came forward as the zealous, the vehement advocate of the "true philosophy."¹ He threatened misery in this life, and all the pains of hell (of which he is prodigal in his early writings) against the unnatural, the soul-slaying fathers, who forced their sons to expose themselves to the guilt and danger of the world, and forbade them to enter into the earthly society of angels: by this phrase he describes the monasteries near Antioch. He relates, with triumph, the clandestine conversion of a noble youth, through the connivance of his mother, whom the father, himself a soldier, had destined to serve in the armies of the empire.

But Chrysostom himself, whether he considered that the deep devotion of the monastery for some years had braced his soul to encounter the more perilous duties of the priesthood, appeared again in Antioch. His return was hailed by Flavianus, the bishop, who had succeeded to Meletius. He was ordained deacon, and then presbyter, and at once took his station in that office, which was sometimes reserved for the bishop, as the principal preacher in that voluptuous and effeminate city.

The fervid imagination and glowing eloquence of Chrysostom, which had been lavished on the angelic immunity of the cœnobite or the hermit from the passions, ambition, and avarice inseparable from a secular life, now arrayed his new office in a dignity and saintly perfection, which might awake the purest ambition of the Christian. Chrysostom has the most exalted notion of the majesty, at the same time of the severity, of the sacerdotal character. His views of

¹ *Adversus Oppugnatores Vitæ Monasticæ.*

the office, of its mission and authority, are the most sublime; his demands upon their purity, blamelessness, and superiority to the rest of mankind, proportionably rigorous.¹

Nor, in the loftiness of his tone as a preacher or his sanctity as a man, did he fall below his own standard of the Christian priesthood. His preaching already took its peculiar character. It was not so much addressed to the opinions as to the conscience of man. He threw aside the subtleties of speculative theology, and repudiated, in general, the fine-drawn allegory in which the interpreters of Scripture had displayed their ingenuity, and amazed and fruitlessly wearied their unimproved audience. His scope was plain, severe, practical. Rigidly orthodox in his doctrine, he seemed to dwell more on the fruits of a pure theology (though at times he could not keep aloof from controversy) than on theology itself.

If, in her ordinary course of voluptuous amusement, of constant theatrical excitement, Antioch could not but listen to the commanding voice of the Christian orator, it is no wonder that in her hour of danger, possibly of impending ruin, the whole city stood trembling and awe-struck beneath his pulpit. Soon after he had assumed the sacerdotal office, Chrysostom was placed in an extraordinary position as the representative of the bishop.

In one of those sudden tumultuous insurrections which take place among the populace of large cities, Antioch had resisted the exorbitant demands of a new taxation, maltreated the imperial officers, and thrown down and dragged about, with every kind of insult, the statues of Theodosius, his

A.D. 387.

¹ The treatise, *De Sacerdotio*, *passim*

empress, and their two sons.¹ The stupor of fear succeeded to this momentary outbreak of mutiny, which had been quelled by a single troop of archers. For days the whole people awaited in shuddering agitation the sentence of the emperor. The anger of Theodosius was terrible; he had not yet, it is true, ordered the massacre of the whole population of Thessalonica, but his stern and relentless character was too well known. Dark rumors spread abroad that he had threatened to burn Antioch, to exterminate its inhabitants, and to pass the ploughshare over its ruins. Multitudes fled destitute from the city; others remained shut up in their houses, for fear of being seized. Instead of the forum crowded with thousands, one or two persons were seen timidly wandering about. The gay and busy Antioch had the appearance of a captured and depopulated city. The theatres, the circus, were closed; no marriage-song was heard; even the schools were shut up.² In the mean time the Government resumed its unlimited and unresisted authority, which it administered with the sternest severity and rigorous inquisition into the guilt of individuals. The prisons were thronged with criminals of every rank and station; confiscation swept away their wealth, punishments of every degree were inflicted on their persons. Citizens of the highest rank were ignominiously scourged; those who con-

¹ It is curious to observe the similarity between the Pagan and Christian accounts of this incident, which we have the good fortune to possess. Both ascribe the guilt to a few strangers, under the instigation of diabolic agency. *Τοιούτοις ὑπηρέταις ὁ κακὸς χρόμενος δαίμων, ἐπραξεν, ἃ σωπῶν ἐβουλόμην.* This is a sentence of Libanius (ad Theodos. iv. p. 638), not of Chrysostom. Flavianus exhorts Theodosius to pardon Antioch, in order that he may disappoint the malice of the devils, to whom he ascribes the guilt. — Chrys. Hom. xvi. ad Antioch.

² Liban. ad Theod., *in fin.*

fessed their guilt were put to the sword, burned alive, or thrown to the wild beasts.¹ Chrysostom's description of the agony of those days is in the highest style of dramatic oratory. Women of the highest rank, brought up with the utmost delicacy and accustomed to every luxury, were seen crowding around the gates, or in the outer judgment hall, unattended, repelled by the rude soldiery, but still clinging to the doors or prostrate on the ground, listening to the clash of the scourges, the shrieks of the tortured victims, and the shouts of the executioners; one minute supposing that they recognized the familiar voices of fathers, husbands, or brothers; or trembling lest those who were undergoing torture should denounce their relatives and friends. Chrysostom passes from this scene, by a bold but natural transition, to the terrors of the final Judgment, and the greater agony of that day.

Now was the time to put to the test the power of Christianity, and to ascertain whether the orthodox opinions of Theodosius were altogether independent of that humanity which is the essence of the Gospel. Would the Christian emperor listen to the persuasive supplications of the Christian prelate,—that prelate for whose character he had expressed the highest respect?

While Flavianus, the aged and feeble bishop, quitting the bedside of his dying sister, set forth on his pious mission to the West, on Chrysostom devolved the duty of assuaging the fears, of administering consolation, and of profiting by this state of stupor and dejection to correct the vices and enforce serious thoughts upon the light and dissolute

Flavianus
sets forth to
intercede for
mercy.

¹ Chrysostom asserts this in a fine passage, in which he reminds his hearers of their greater offences against God. *Καὶ οἱ μὲν σιδήρῳ, οἱ δὲ πυρὶ, οἱ δὲ θηρίοις παραδοθέντες ἀπώλοντο.* — Hom. iii. 6, p. 45.

people. Day after day he ascended the pulpit; the whole population, deserting the forum, forgetting the theatre and the circus, thronged the churches. There was even an attendance (an unusual circumstance) after the hour of dinner. The whole city became a church. There is wonderful skill and judgment in the art with which the orator employs the circumstances of the time for his purpose; in the manner in which he allays the terror, without too highly encouraging the hopes, of the people: "The clemency of the emperor *may* forgive their guilt, but the Christians ought to be superior to the fear of death; they cannot be secure of pardon in this world, but they may be secure of immortality in the world to come."

Long before the success of the bishop's intercession could be known, the delegates of the emperor, Hellabichus and Cæsarius, arrived with the sentence of Theodosius, which was merciful, if compared with what they had feared, — the destruction of the city, and the massacre of its inhabitants. But it was fatal to the pleasures, the comforts, the pride of Antioch. The theatres and the circus were to be closed; Antioch was no longer to enjoy theatrical representations of any kind; the baths, in an Eastern city not objects of luxury alone, but of cleanliness and health, were to be shut; and Antioch was degraded from the rank of a metropolitan city, to a town under the jurisdiction of Laodicea.

The city was in the deepest depression, but Chrysostom maintained his lofty tone of consolation. Antioch ought to rejoice at the prohibition of those scenes of vice and dissipation which disgraced the theatres: the baths tended to effeminacy and luxury, they were disdained by true philosophy, — the monas-

tic system ; the dignity of the city did not depend on its rank in the empire, but on the virtue of its citizens ; it might be a heavenly, if no longer an earthly, metropolis.

The inquisition into the guilt of those who had actually assisted, or had looked on in treasonable indifference, while the statues of the emperor and his family were treated with such unseemly contumely, had commenced under the regular authorities : it was now carried on with stern and indiscriminate impartiality. The prisoners were crowded together in a great open enclosure, in one close and agonizing troop, which comprehended the whole senate of the city. The third day of the inquiry was to witness the execution of the guilty ; and no one, not the relatives or kindred of the wealthiest, the noblest, or the highest in station, knew whether the doom had not fallen on their fathers or husbands.

But Hellabichus and Cæsarius were men of humanity, and ventured to suspend the execution of the sentence. They listened to the supplications of the people. One mother, especially, seized and clung to the reins of the horse of Hellabichus. The monks who, while the philosophers, as Chrysostom asserts, had fled the city, had poured down from their mountain solitudes, and during the whole time had endeavored to assuage the fear of the people, and to awaken the compassion of the Government, renewed, not without effect, their pious exertions.¹ They crowded round the tribunal, and one, named Macedonius, was so courageous as boldly to remonstrate against the crime of avenging the destruction of a few images of brass by the destruction of the image of God in so many human beings

¹ Chrysostom, Hom. xvii. vol. ii. p. 172

Cæsarius himself undertook a journey to Constantino-ple for farther instructions.

At length Chrysostom had the satisfaction to announce to the people the return of the bishop with an act of unlimited amnesty. He described the interview of Flavianus with the emperor; his silence, his shame, his tears, when Theodosius gently reminded him of his benefactions to the city which enhanced their heinous ingratitude. The reply of Flavianus, though the orator professes to relate it on the authority of one present at the interview, is no doubt colored by the eloquence of Chrysostom. The bishop acknowledged the guilt of the city in the most humiliating language. But he urged, that, the greater that guilt, the greater would be the magnanimity of the emperor if he should pardon it. He would raise statues, not of perishable materials, in the hearts of all mankind. It is not the glory of Theodosius, he proceeded, but Christianity itself, which is put to the test before the world. The Jews and Greeks, even the most remote barbarians, are anxiously watching whether this sentence will be that of Christian clemency. How will they all glorify the Christian's God if he shall restrain the wrath of the master of the world, and subdue him to that humanity which would be magnanimous even in a private man! Inexorable punishment might awe other cities into obedience, but mercy would attach mankind by the stronger bonds of love. It would be an imperishable example of clemency; and all future acts of other sovereigns would be but the fruit of this, and would reflect their glory on Theodosius. What glory to concede that to a single aged priest, from the fear of God, which he had refused to all other suppliants! For

Issue of the
interview of
Flavianus
with the
emperor.

himself, Flavianus could never bear to return to his native city; he would remain an exile, until that city was reconciled with the emperor. Theodosius, it is said, called to mind the prayer of the Saviour for his enemies, and satisfied his wounded pride that in his mercy he imitated his Redeemer. He was even anxious that Flavianus should return to announce the full pardon before the festival of Easter. "Let the Gentiles," exclaims the ardent preacher, "be confounded, or, rather, let them be instructed by this unexampled instance of imperial clemency and episcopal influence." ¹

Theodosius had ceased to reign many years before Chrysostom was summoned to the pontifical throne of Constantinople. The East was now governed by women and eunuchs. In assuming the episcopal throne of the metropolis, to which he is said to have been transported almost by force, Chrysostom, who could not but be conscious of his power over the minds of men, might entertain visions of the noblest and purest ambition. His views of the dignity of the sacerdotal character were as lofty as those of his contemporaries in the West: while he asserted their authority, which set them apart and far above the rest of mankind, he demanded a moral superiority and entire devotion to their calling, which could not but rivet their authority upon the minds of men. The clergy, such as his glowing imagination conceived them, would unite the strongest corporate spirit with the highest individual zeal and purity. The influence of the bishop in Antioch, the deference which Theodosius had shown to the intercession of Flavi-

A.D. 398.
Chrysostom,
Bishop of
Constantinople.

¹ Chrysostom had ventured to assert, "Ἀπερ οὐδενὶ ἑτέρῳ, ταῦτα χαρίζεται τοῖς ἱερεῦσι. — Hom. xxi. 3.

anus, might encourage Chrysostom in the fallacious hope of restoring peace, virtue, and piety, as well as orthodoxy, in the imperial city.

But in the East, more particularly in the metropolis, the sacerdotal character never assumed the unassailable sanctity, the awful inviolability, which it attained in the West. The religion of Constantinople was that of the emperor. Instead of growing up, like the Bishop of Rome, first to independence, afterwards to sovereignty, the religious supremacy was overawed and obscured by the presence of the Imperial Government. In Rome, the pope was subject at times to the rebellious control of the aristocracy, or exposed to the irreverent fury of the populace; but he constantly emerged from his transient obscurity and resumed his power. In Constantinople, a voluptuous court, a savage populace, at this period multitudes of concealed Arians, and heretics of countless shades and hues at all periods, thwarted the plans, debased the dignity, and desecrated the person of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

In some respects, Chrysostom's character wanted the peculiar and perhaps inconsistent qualifications requisite for his position. He was the preacher, but not the man of the world. A great capital is apt to demand that magnificence in its prelate at which it murmurs. It will not respect less than splendid state and the show of authority, while at the same time it would have the severest austerity and the strongest display of humility,—the pomp of the pontiff with the poverty and lowliness of the apostle. Chrysostom carried the asceticism of the monk not merely into his private chamber, but into his palace and his hall. The great prelates of the West, when it was expedient,

Difference
of the sacer-
dotal power
in Rome and
Constanti-
nople.

could throw off the monk, and appear as statesmen or as nobles in their public transactions; though this, indeed, was much less necessary than in Constantinople. But Chrysostom cherished all these habits with zealous, perhaps with ostentatious, fidelity. Instead of munificent hospitality, he took his scanty meal in his solitary chamber. His rigid economy endured none of that episcopal sumptuousness with which his predecessor Nectarius had dazzled the public eye: he proscribed all the carpets, all the silken dresses; he sold the costly furniture and the rich vessels of his residence; he was said even to have retrenched from the church some of its gorgeous plate, and to have sold some rich marbles and furniture designed for the Anastasia. He was lavish, on the other hand, in his expenditure on the hospitals and charitable institutions. But even the uses to which they were applied, did not justify to the general feeling the alienation of those ornaments from the service of the church. The populace, who, no doubt, in their hours of discontent, had contrasted the magnificence of Nectarius with apostolical poverty, were now offended by the apostolical poverty of Chrysostom, which seemed unworthy of his lofty station.

But the Bishop of Constantinople had even a more difficult task in prescribing to himself the limits of his interference with secular affairs. It is easy to imagine, in the clergy, a high and serene indifference to the political tumults of society. This is perpetually demanded by those who find the sacerdotal influence adverse to their own views; but to the calm inquirer, this simple question becomes the most difficult and intricate problem in religious history. If

Political
difficulties of
Chrysostom.

Interference
of the clergy
in secular
affairs.

religion consisted solely in the intercourse between man and his Creator ; if the Christian minister were merely the officiating functionary in the ceremonial of the Church, the human mediator between the devotion of man and the providence of God, the voice which expresses the common adoration, the herald who announces the gracious message of revelation to mankind, — nothing could be more clear than the line which might exclude him from all political, or even all worldly affairs. But Christianity is likewise a moral power ; and, as that moral power or guide, religion, and the minister of religion, cannot refrain from interposing in all questions of human conduct ; as the interpreter of the divine law to the perplexed and doubting conscience, it cannot but spread its dominion over the whole field of human action. In this character, religion embraced the whole life of man, public as well as private. How was the minister of that religion to pause and discriminate as to the extent of his powers, particularly since the public acts of the most eminent in station possessed such unlimited influence over the happiness of society and even the eternal welfare of the whole community ? What public misconduct was not at the same time an unchristian act ? Were the clergy, by connivance, to become accomplices in vices which they did not endeavor to counteract ? Christianity on the throne, as in the cottage, was equally bound to submit on every point in which religious motive or principle ought to operate, in every act, therefore, of life, to the admitted restraints of the Gospel ; and the general feeling of Christianity at this period had invested the clergy with the right, or rather the duty, of enforcing the precepts of the Gospel on every professed believer. How, then,

were the clergy to distinguish between the individual and political capacity of the man; to respect the prince, yet to advise the Christian; to look with indifference on one set of actions as secular, to admonish on the danger of another as affairs of conscience?

Nor at this early period of its still aggressive, still consciously beneficial influence, could the hierarchy be expected to anticipate with coldly prophetic prudence the fatal consequence of some of its own encroachments on worldly authority. The bishop of a great capital was the conductor, the representative, of the moral power of the Gospel, which was perpetually striving to obtain its ascendancy over brute force, violence, and vice; and of necessity, perhaps, was not always cautious or discreet in the means to which it resorted. It became contaminated in the incessant strife, and forgot its end, or rather sought for the mastery as its end, rather than as the legitimate means of promoting its beneficial objects. Under the full, and no doubt, at first, warrantable persuasion, that it was advancing the happiness and virtue of mankind, where should it arrest its own course, or set limits to its own humanizing and improving interpositions? Thus, under the constant temptation of assuming, as far as possible, the management of affairs which were notoriously mismanaged through the vices of public men, the administration even of public matters by the clergy might seem, to them at least, to insure justice, disinterestedness, and clemency. Till tried by the possession of power, they would be the last to discern the danger of being invested in that power.

The first signal interposition of Chrysostom in the political affairs of Constantinople, was an act not

merely of humanity, but of gratitude. Eutropius the eunuch, minister of the feeble Arcadius, is condemned to immortal infamy by the vigorous satire of Claudian. Among his few good deeds, had been the advancement of Chrysostom to the see of Constantinople. Eutropius had found it necessary to restrict the right of asylum, which began to be generally claimed by all the Christian churches; little foreseeing that to the bold assertion of that right he would owe his life.

There is something sublime in the first notion of the right of asylum. It is one of those institutions based in the universal religious sentiment of man; it is found in almost all religions. In the Greek, as in the Jewish, man took refuge from the vengeance, often from the injustice, of his fellow-men, in the presence of the gods. Not merely private revenge, but the retributive severity of the law, stands rebuked before the dignity of the divine court, in which the criminal has lodged his appeal. The lustrations in the older religions, the rites of expiation and reconciliation performed in many of the temples, the appellations of certain deities, as the reconcilers or pacifiers of man,¹ were inwoven with their mythology, and embodied in their poetry. But Christianity, in a still higher and more universal sense, might assume to take under its protection, in order to amend and purify, the outcast of society, whom human justice followed with relentless vengeance. As the representative of the God of mercy it excluded no human being from the pale of repentance, and would protect the worst, when disposed to that salutary change, if it could possibly be made

¹ The ἀποτροπαοὶ, or averruncatores.

consistent with the public peace and safety. The merciful intervention of the clergy between the criminal and his sentence, at a period when the laws were so implacable and sanguinary, was at once consistent with Christian charity and tended to some mitigation of the ferocious manners of the age. It gave time at least for exasperated justice to reconsider its sentence, and checked that vindictive impulse, which, if it did not outrun the law, hurried it to instantaneous and irrevocable execution.¹ But that which commenced in pure benevolence had already, it should seem, begun to degenerate into a source of power. The course of justice was impeded, but not by a wise discrimination between the more or less heinous delinquents, or a salutary penitential system, which might reclaim the guilty and safely restore him to society.

Like other favorites of arbitrary sovereigns, Eutropius was suddenly precipitated from the height of power. The army forced the sen-
A.D. 399.
tence of his dismissal from the timid emperor; and the furious populace, as usual, thirsted for the blood of him to whose unbounded sway they had so long submitted in humble obedience. Eutropius fled in haste to that asylum, the sanctity of which had been limited by his own decree; and the courage and influence of Chrysostom protected that most forlorn of

¹ In a law which is extant in Greek, there is an elaborate argument, that if the right of asylum had been granted by the Heathen to their altars, and to the statues of the emperors, it ought to belong to the temples of God.

See the laws which defined the right of asylum, Cod. Theodos. ix. 45, 3, *et seqq.* The sacred space extended to the outer gates of the church. But those who took refuge in the church were on no account to be permitted to profane the holy building itself by eating or sleeping within it. "*Quibus si perfuga non adnuit, neque consentit, præferenda humanitati religio est.*" There was a strong prohibition against introducing arms into the churches, — a prohibition which the emperors themselves did not scruple to violate on more than one occasion.

human beings, the discarded favorite of a despot. The armed soldiery and the raging populace were met at the door of the church by the defenceless ecclesiastic. His demeanor and the sanctity of the place arrested the blind fury of the assailants. Chrysostom before the emperor pleaded the cause of Eutropius with the same fearless freedom; and for once the life of a fallen minister was spared, his sentence was commuted for banishment. His fate, indeed, was only delayed: he was afterwards brought back from Cyprus, his place of exile, and beheaded at Chalcedon.

But with all his courage, his eloquence, his moral dignity, Chrysostom, instead of establishing a firm and permanent authority over Constantinople, became himself the victim of intrigue and jealousy. Besides his personal habits and manners, the character of Chrysostom, firm on great occasions and eminently persuasive when making a general address to the multitude, was less commanding and authoritative in his constant daily intercourse with the various orders. Calm and self-possessed as an orator, he was accused of being passionate and overbearing in ordinary business: the irritability of feeble health may have caused some part of this infirmity. Men, whose minds, like that of Chrysostom, are centred on one engrossing object, are apt to abandon the details of business to others, who thus become necessary to them, and at length, if artful and dexterous, rule them with inextricable sway: they have much knowledge of mankind, little practical acquaintance with individual men.

Chrysostom
governed by
his deacon
Serapion.

Thus, Chrysostom was completely governed by his deacon Serapion, who managed his affairs, and like all men of address in such

stations, while he exercised all the power, and secured the solid advantages, left the odium and responsibility upon his master. On the whole, the character of Chrysostom retained something of the unworldly monastic enthusiasm, and wanted decisive practical wisdom, when compared, for instance, with Ambrose in the West; and thus his character powerfully contributed to his fall.¹

But the circumstances of his situation might have embarrassed even Ambrose himself. All orders and interests conspired against him. The court would not endure the grave and severe censor; the clergy rebelled against the rigor of the prelate's discipline; the populace, though, when under the spell of his eloquence, fondly attached to his person, no doubt, in general resented his implacable condemnation of their amusements. The Arians, to whom, in his uncompromising zeal, he had persuaded the emperor to refuse a single church, though demanded by the most powerful subject of the empire, Gainas the Goth, were still no doubt secretly powerful. A Pagan prefect, Optatus, seized the opportunity of wreaking his animosity towards Christianity itself upon its powerful advocate. Some wealthy females are named as resenting the severe condemnation of their dress and manners.²

Of all these adversaries, the most dangerous, the most persevering, and the most implacable, were those of his own order and his own rank.³ The sacerdotal

¹ The unfavorable view of Chrysostom's character is brought out perhaps with more than impartiality by the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen, who wrote at Constantinople, and may have preserved much of the hostile tradition relating to him.

² Tillemont, p. 180.

³ The good Tillemont confesses this humiliating truth with shame and reluctance. — *Vie de Chrysostome*, p. 181.

authority in the East was undermined by its own divisions. The imperial power, which, in the hands of a violent and not irreproachable woman, the empress Eudoxia, might, perhaps, have quailed before the energy of a blameless and courageous prelate, allied itself with one section of the Church, and so secured its triumph over the whole. The more Chrysostom endeavored to carry out by episcopal authority those exalted notions of the sacerdotal character which he had developed in his work upon the priesthood, the more he estranged many of his natural supporters. He visited the whole of Asia Minor; degraded bishops; exposed with unsparing indignation the vices and venality of the clergy; and involved them all in one indiscriminate charge of simony and licentiousness. The assumption of this authority was somewhat questionable: the severity with which it was exercised did not reconcile the reluctant province to submission. Among the malcontent clergy, four bishops took the lead; but the head of this unrelenting faction was

Theophilus of Alexandria. Theophilus, the violent and unscrupulous Prelate of Alexandria. The apparently trivial causes which inflamed the hostility of Theophilus confirm a suspicion, previously suggested, that the rivalry of the two principal sees in the East mingled with the personal animosity of Theophilus against the Bishop of Constantinople. Chrysostom had been accused of extending his jurisdiction beyond its legitimate bounds. Certain monks of Nitria had fled from the persecutions of Theophilus, and taken refuge in Constantinople; and Chrysostom had extended his countenance, if not his protection, to these revolted subjects of the Alexandrian prelate. But he had declined to take legal cognizance of the dispute

as a superior prelate, or as the head of a council; partly, he states,¹ out of respect for Theophilus, partly because he was unwilling to interfere in the affairs of another province. But Theophilus was not so scrupulous; he revenged himself for the supposed invasion of his own province by a most daring inroad on that of his rival. He assumed for the Patriarch of Alexandria the right of presiding over the Eastern bishops, and of summoning the Bishop of Constantinople before this irregular tribunal. Theophilus, with the sanction, if not by the invitation, of the empress, landed at Constantinople. He was accompanied by a band of Alexandrian mariners as a protection against the populace of the city.

The council was held, not in Constantinople, but at a place called the Oak, in the suburb of Chalcedon. It consisted for the most part of Egyptian bishops, under the direct influence of Theophilus, and of Asiatic prelates, the personal enemies of Chrysostom.² For fourteen days it held its sessions, and received informations, which gradually grew into twenty-nine grave and specific charges. Four times was Chrysostom summoned to appear before this self-appointed tribunal, of which it was impossible for him to recognize the legal authority. In the mean time, he was not inactive in his peculiar sphere,—the pulpit. Unfortunately, the authenticity of the sermon ascribed to him at this period is not altogether certain, nor the time at which some extant discourses, if genuine, were delivered, conclusively settled. One, however, bears strong indications of the manner and sentiments of Chrysostom; and it is

Council of
the Oak.

¹ Epist. ad Innocentium Papam, vol. iii. p. 516.

² It is contested whether there were thirty or forty-six bishops.

generally acknowledged that he either did boldly use, or was accused of using, language full of contumelious allusion to the empress. This sermon, therefore, if not an accurate report of his expressions, may convey the sense of what he actually uttered, or which was attributed to him by his adversaries.¹ "The billows," said the energetic prelate, "are mighty, and the storm furious; but we fear not to be wrecked, for we are founded on a rock. What can I fear? Death? *To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Exile? *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.* Confiscation? *We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out of it.* I scorn the terrors, and smile at the advantages of life. I fear not death. I desire to live only for your profit. The Church against which you strive, dashes away your assaults into idle foam. It is fixed by God: who shall revoke it? The Church is stronger than heaven itself. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.* . . . But you know, my brethren, the true cause of my ruin. Because I have not strewn rich carpets on my floors, nor clothed myself in sitken robes; because I have discountenanced the sensuality of certain persons. The seed of the serpent is still alive, but grace is still on the side of Elijah." Then

¹ It is singularly characteristic of the Christianity of the times, to observe the charges against which Chrysostom protests with the greatest vehemence; and this part of the oration in question is confirmed by one of his letters to Cyriacus. Against that of personal impurity with a female, he calmly offers the most unquestionable evidence. But he was likewise accused of having administered baptism after he had eaten. On this he breaks out: "If I have done this, Anathema upon me! may I be no longer counted among bishops nor be admitted among the angels accepted of God!" He was said to have administered the sacrament to those who had in like manner broken their fast. "If I have done so, may I be rejected of Christ!" He then justifies himself, even if guilty, by the example of Paul, and even of Christ himself but still seems to look on this breach of discipline with the utmost horror.

follows in obscure and embarrassed language, as though, if genuine, the preacher were startled at his own boldness, an allusion to the fate of John the Baptist, and to the hostility of Herodias: "It is a time of wailing: lo, all things tend to *"disgrace;"* but time judgeth all things." The fatal word, "*disgrace,"* (*ἀδοξία*) was supposed to be an allusion to Eudoxia, the empress.

There was a secret understanding between the court and the council. The court urged the proceedings of the council; and the council pronounced the sentence of deposition, but left to the court to take cognizance of the darker charge of high treason, of which they asserted Chrysostom to be guilty, but which was beyond their jurisdiction. The alleged treason was the personal insult to the empress Eudoxia, which was construed into exciting the people to rebellion. But the execution of this sentence embarrassed the council and the irresolute Government. Chrysostom now again ruled the popular mind with unbounded sway. It would have been dangerous to have seized him in the church, environed, as he constantly was, by crowds of admiring hearers, whom a few fervent words might have maddened into insurrection.

Chrysostom, however, shrunk, whether from timidity or Christian peacefulness of disposition, from being the cause, even innocently of tumult and bloodshed. He had neither the ambition, the desperate recklessness, nor perhaps the resolution, of a demagogue. He would not be the Christian tribune of the people. He seized the first opportunity of the absence of his hearers quietly to surrender himself to the imperial officers. He was cautiously trans-

Condemnation of Chrysostom.

Chrysostom leaves Constantinople.

ported by night, though the jealous populace crowded the streets in order to release their prelate from the hands of his enemies, to the opposite side of the Bosphorus, and confined in a villa on the Bithynian shore.

The triumph of Chrysostom's enemies was complete. Theophilus entered the city, and proceeded to wreak his vengeance on the partisans of his adversary; the empress rejoiced in the conscious assurance of her power; the people were overawed into gloomy and sullen silence.

The night of the following day, strange and awful sounds were heard throughout the city. The palace, the whole of Constantinople, shook with an earthquake.

Earthquake. The empress, as superstitious as she was

violent, when she felt her chamber rock beneath her, shuddering at the manifest wrath of Heaven, fell on her knees, and entreated the emperor to revoke the fatal sentence. She wrote a hasty letter, disclaiming all hostility to the banished prelate, and protesting that she was "innocent of his blood." The next day, the palace was surrounded by clamorous multitudes, impatiently demanding his recall. The voice of the people and the voice of God seemed to join in the vindication of Chrysostom. The

*Return of
Chrysostom.*

edict of recall was issued; the Bosphorus swarmed with barks, eager to communicate the first intelligence, and to obtain the honor of bringing back the guardian and the pride of the city. He was met on his arrival by the whole population, men, women, and children; all who could, bore torches in their hands; and hymns of thanksgiving, composed for the occasion, were chanted before him, as he proceeded to the great church. His enemies fled on all sides

Soon after, Theophilus, on the demand of a free council, left Constantinople, at the dead of the night, and embarked for Alexandria.

There is again some doubt as to the authenticity of the first discourse delivered by Chrysostom on this occasion; none of the second. But the first was an extemporaneous address, to which the extant speech appears to correspond. "What shall I say? Blessed be God! These were my last words on my departure, these the first on my return. Blessed be God! because he permitted the storm to rage. Blessed be God! because he has allayed it. Let my enemies behold how their conspiracy has advanced my peace, and redounded to my glory. Before, the church alone was crowded, now, the whole forum is become a church. The games are celebrating in the circus, but the whole people pour like a torrent to the church. Your prayers in my behalf are more glorious than a diadem,—the prayers both of men and women; for in *Christ there is neither male nor female.*"

In the second oration he draws an elaborate comparison between the situation of Abraham in Egypt and his own. The barbarous Egyptian (this struck, no doubt, at Theophilus) had endeavored to defile his Sarah, the Church of Constantinople; but the faithful Church had remained, by the power of God, uncontaminated by this rebuked Abimelech. He dwelt with pardonable pride on the faithful attachment of his followers. They had conquered; but how? by prayer and submission. The enemy had brought arms into the sanctuary, they had prayed; like a spider's web the enemy had been scattered, the faithful remained firm as a rock. The empress herself had joined the

triumphal procession, when the sea became, as the city, covered with all ranks, all ages, and both sexes.¹

But the peace and triumph of Chrysostom were not lasting. As the fears of the empress were allayed, the old feeling of hatred to the bishop, imbittered by the shame of defeat, and the constant suspicion that either the preacher or his audience pointed at her his most vigorous declamation, rankled in the mind of Eudoxia. It had become a strife for ascendancy, and neither could recede with safety and honor. Opportunities could not but occur to enrage and exasperate; nor would ill-disposed persons be wanting to inflame the passions of the empress, by misrepresenting and personally applying the bold and indignant language of the prelate.

A statue of the empress was about to be erected; and on these occasions of public festival the people were wont to be indulged in dances, pantomimes, and every kind of theatrical amusement. The zeal of Chrysostom was always especially directed against these idolatrous amusements, which often, he confesses, drained the church of his hearers. This, now ill-timed, zeal was especially awakened, because the statue was to be erected, and the rejoicings to take place, in front of the entrance to the great church, the St. Sophia. His denunciations were construed into personal insults to the empress; she threatened a new council. The prelate threw off the remaining restraints of prudence; repeated more explicitly the allusion which he had before but covertly hinted. He thundered out a homily, with the memorable exordium, "Herodias is maddening, Herodias is dancing,

¹ Chrysostom, in both these discourses, states a curious circumstance, that the Jews of Constantinople took great interest in his cause.

Herodias demands the head of John." If Chrysostom could even be suspected of such daring outrage against the temporal sovereign, if he ventured on language approaching to such unmeasured hostility, it was manifest that either the imperial authority must quail and submit to the sacerdotal domination, or employ, without scruple, its power to crush the bold usurpation.

An edict of the emperor suspended the prelate from his functions. Though forty-two bishops ^{Second condemnation of Chrysostom.} adhered, with inflexible fidelity, to his cause, he was condemned by a second hostile council, not on any new charge, but for contumacy in resisting the decrees of the former assembly, and for a breach of the ecclesiastical laws, in resuming his authority while under the condemnation of a council.

The soldiers of the emperor were more dangerous enemies than the prelates. In the midst of ^{A D. 404. Tumults in the church.} the solemn celebration of Good Friday, in the great church of Santa Sophia, the military forced their way, not merely into the nave, but up to the altar, on which were placed the consecrated elements. Many worshippers were trodden under foot; many wounded by the swords of the soldiers; the clergy were dragged to prison; some females, who were about to be baptized, were obliged to fly with their disordered apparel: the waters of the font were stained with blood; the soldiers pressed up to the altar; seized the sacred vessels as their plunder: the sacred elements were scattered about; their garments were bedewed with the blood of the Redeemer.¹ Constantinople for several days had the appearance

¹ Chrysostom, Epist. ad Innocentium, c. iii. v. iii. p. 519. Chrysostom exempts the emperor from all share in this outrage, but attributes it to the hostile bishops

of a city which had been stormed. Wherever the partisans of Chrysostom were assembled, they were assaulted and dispersed by the soldiery; females were exposed to insult, and one frantic attempt was made to assassinate the prelate.¹

Chrysostom at length withdrew from the contest, he escaped from the friendly custody of his adherents, and surrendered himself to the imperial officers. He was immediately conveyed by night to the Asiatic shore. At the instant of his departure, another fearful calamity agitated the public mind. The church which he left burst into flames; and the conflagration, said to have first broken out in the episcopal throne, reached the roof of the building, and spread from thence to the senate-house. These two magnificent edifices, the latter of which contained some noble specimens of ancient art, became in a few hours a mass of ruins. The partisans of Chrysostom, and Chrysostom himself, were, of course, accused of this act, the author of which was never discovered, and in which no life was lost. But the bishop was charged with the horrible design of destroying his enemies in the church: his followers were charged with the guilt of incendiarism with a less atrocious object, that no bishop after Chrysostom might be seated in his pontifical throne.²

The prelate was not permitted to choose his place of exile. The peaceful spots which might have been found in the more genial climate of Bithynia, or in

¹ See Letter to Olympias, p. 548.

² There are three laws in the Theodosian Code against unlawful and seditious meetings (*conventicula*), directed against the followers of Chrysostom, — the *Joannitæ*, as they were called, “*qui sacrilego animo auctoritatem nostri numinis ausi fuerint expugnare.*” The *deity* is the usual term; but the deity of the feeble Arcadius, and of the passionate Eudoxia, reads strangely.

the adjacent provinces, would have been too near the capital. He was transported to Cucusus, a small town in the mountainous and savage district of Armenia. On his journey thither of several days, he suffered much from fever and disquiet of mind, and from the cruelty of the officer who commanded the guard.¹

Yet his influence was not extinguished by his absence. The Eastern Church was almost governed from the solitary cell of Chrysostom. He corresponded in all quarters; women of rank and opulence sought his solitude in disguise. The bishops of many distant sees sent him assistance, and coveted his advice. The Bishop of Rome received his letters with respect, and wrote back ardent commendations of his patience. The exile of Cucusus exercised perhaps more extensive authority than the Patriarch of Constantinople.²

He was not, however, permitted to remain in peace in this miserable seclusion: sometimes his life was endangered by the invasions of the Isaurian marauders; and he was obliged to take refuge in a neighboring fortress, named Ardissa. He encouraged his

¹ The zeal of Chrysostom did not slumber even in this remote retreat. In his power he had caused to be destroyed all the temples of Cybele in Phrygia. He now urged the tardy monks to the destruction of all the Heathen Temples in the neighboring districts. — Epist. 129, 126. Compare Chastel, p. 220.

² Among his letters may be remarked those written to the celebrated Olympias. This wealthy widow, who had refused the solicitations or commands of Theodosius to marry one of his favorites, had almost washed away, by her austerities and virtues, the stain of her nuptials, and might rank in Christian estimation with those unsullied virgins who had never been contaminated by marriage. She was the friend of all the distinguished and orthodox clergy, — of Gregory of Nazianzum, and of Chrysostom. Chrysostom records to her *praise*, that, by her austerities, she had brought on painful diseases, which baffled the art of medicine. — Chrysost. Epist. viii p. 540.

ardent disciples with the hope, the assurance, of his speedy return ; but he miscalculated the obstinate and implacable resentment of his persecutors. At length an order came to remove him to Pityus, on the Euxine, a still more savage place on the verge of the empire. He died on the journey, near Comana, in Pontus.

Some years afterwards, the remains of Chrysostom were transported to Constantinople with the utmost reverence, and received with solemn pomp. Constantinople, and the imperial family, submitted with eager zeal to worship as a saint him whom they would not endure as a prelate.

The remarkable part in the whole of this persecution of Chrysostom is, that it arose not out of difference of doctrine or polemic hostility. No charge of heresy darkened the pure fame of the great Christian orator. His persecution had not the dignity of conscientious bigotry ; it was a struggle for power between the temporal and ecclesiastical supremacy : but the passions and the personal animosities of ecclesiastics, the ambition and perhaps the jealousy of the Alexandrian patriarch as to jurisdiction, lent themselves to the degradation of the episcopal authority in Constantinople, from which it never rose. No doubt the choleric temper, the overstrained severity, the monastic habits, the ambition to extend his authority, perhaps beyond its legitimate bounds, and the indiscreet zeal of Chrysostom, laid him open to his adversaries ; but in any other station, in the episcopate of any other city, these infirmities would have been lost in the splendor of his talents and his virtues. Though he might not have weaned the general mass of the people from their vices or their amusements, which he

His remains
transported
to Constantinople.

proscribed with equal severity, yet he would have commanded general respect; and nothing less than a schism, arising out of religious difference, would have shaken or impaired his authority.

At all events, the fall of Chrysostom was an inauspicious omen, and a warning which might repress the energy of future prelates; and, doubtless, the issue of this conflict materially tended to degrade the office of the chief bishop in the Eastern empire. It may be questioned whether the proximity of the court, and such a court as that of the East, would, under any circumstances, have allowed the episcopate to assume its legitimate power, far less to have encroached on the temporal sovereignty. But, after this time, the Bishop of Constantinople almost sank into a high officer of state; appointed by the influence, if not directly nominated by the emperor, his gratitude was bound to reverence, or his prudence to dread, that arbitrary power which had raised him from nothing, and might dismiss him to his former insignificance. Except on some rare occasions, he bowed with the rest of the empire before the capricious will of the sovereign or the ruling favorite: he was content if the emperor respected the outward ceremonial of the Church, and did not openly espouse any heretical doctrine.

Christianity thus remained, in some respects, an antagonist principle, counteracting by its perpetual remonstrance, and rivalling by its attractive ceremonial, the vices and licentious diversions of the capital: but its moral authority was not allied with power; it quailed under the universal despotism, and was entirely inefficient as a corrective of imperial tyranny. It thus escaped the evils inseparable from the undue

elevation of the sacerdotal character, and the temptations to encroach beyond its proper limits on the civil power; but it likewise gradually sank far below that uncompromising independence, that venerable majesty, which might impose some restraint on the worst excesses of violence, and infuse justice and humanity into the manners of the court and of the people.

CHAPTER X.

The great Prelates of the West.

THE character and the fate of Ambrose offer the strongest contrast with that of Chrysostom. Ambrose was no dreaming solitary brought up in the seclusion of the desert or among a fraternity of religious husbandmen. He had been versed in civil business from his youth ; he had already obtained a high station in the imperial service. His eloquence had little of the richness, imaginative variety, or dramatic power of the Grecian orator ; hard but vigorous, it was Roman, forensic, practical, — I mean where it related to affairs of business, or addressed men in general : it has, as we shall hereafter observe, a very different character in some of his theological writings.

Ambrose,
Archbishop
of Milan.

In Ambrose the sacerdotal character assumed a dignity and an influence as yet unknown ; it first began to confront the throne, not only on terms of equality, but of superior authority, and to exercise a spiritual dictatorship over the supreme magistrate. The resistance of Athanasius to the imperial authority had been firm but deferential, passive rather than aggressive. In his *public* addresses he had respected the majesty of the empire ; at all events, the hierarchy of that period only questioned the authority of the sovereign in matters of faith. But in Ambrose the episcopal power acknowledged no limits to its moral dominion, and admitted no distinction of persons. While the bishops

of Rome were comparatively without authority, and still partially obscured by the concentration of Paganism in the aristocracy of the capitol, the Archbishop of Milan began to develop papal power and papal imperiousness. Ambrose was the spiritual ancestor of the Hildebrands and the Innocents. Like Chrysostom, Ambrose had to strive against the passionate animosity of an empress, not merely exasperated against him by his suspected disrespect and disobedience, but by the bitterness of religious difference. Yet how opposite the result! And Ambrose had to assert his religious authority, not against the feeble Arcadius, but against his father, the great Theodosius. We cannot, indeed, but recognize something of the undegraded Roman of the West in Ambrose: Chrysostom has something of the feebleness and degeneracy of the Byzantine.

The father of Ambrose, who bore the same name, had administered the province of Gaul as prætorian prefect. The younger Ambrose, while pursuing his studies at Rome, had attracted the notice of Probus, prætorian prefect of Italy. Ambrose, through his influence, was appointed to the administration of the provinces of Æmilia and Liguria.¹ Probus was a Christian, and his parting admonition to the young civilian was couched in these prophetic words: "Rule the province, not as a judge, but as a bishop."² Milan was within the department assigned to Ambrose. This city had now begun almost to rival or eclipse Rome as the capital of the Occidental empire; and, from the celebrity of its schools, it was called the Athens of the West. The Church of Milan was rent

¹ Chiefly from the life of Ambrose affixed to the Benedictine edition of his works; the Life by Paulinus; and Tillemont.

² Paul, Vit. Ambros. 8.

with divisions. On a vacancy caused by the death of Auxentius, the celebrated Arian, the two parties, the Arian and the Athanasian, violently contested the appointment of the bishop.

Ambrose appeared in his civil character to allay the tumult, by the awe of his presence and by the persuasive force of his eloquence. He spoke so wisely, and in such a Christian spirit, that a general acclamation suddenly broke forth, "Ambrose, be bishop; Ambrose, be bishop." Ambrose was yet only a catechumen; he attempted in every way, by assuming a severe character as a magistrate, and by flight, to elude the unexpected honor.¹ The ardor of the people, and the approbation of the emperor,² compelled him to assume the office. Ambrose cast off at once the pomp and majesty of his civil state; but that which was in some degree disadvantageous to Chrysostom, his severe simplicity of life, only increased the admiration and attachment of the less luxurious, or at least less effeminate, West, to their pious prelate; for Ambrose assumed only the austerity, nothing of the inactive and contemplative seclusion, of the monastic system. The only Eastern influence which fettered his strong mind was his earnest admiration of celibacy; in all other respects he was a Roman statesman, not a meditative Oriental, or rhetorical Greek. The strong contrast of this doctrine with the dissolute manners of Rome, which no doubt extended to Milan, made it the more impressive; it was received with all the ardor of novelty, and the impetuosity of the Italian character; it captivated all ranks and all orders. Mothers shut up their daughters, lest

Ambrose
bishop.
A. D. 374.

Ambrose
advocate of
celibacy.

¹ De Offic. ; Vita S. Ambros. p. xxxiv. ; Epist. xxi. p. 865; Epist. lxi.

² Compare the account of Valentinian's conduct in Theodoret, iv. 7.

they should be exposed to the chaste seduction of the bishop's eloquence, and, binding themselves by rash vows of virginity, forfeit the hope of becoming Roman matrons. Ambrose, immediately on his appointment, under Valentinian I., asserted that ecclesiastical power which he confirmed under the feeble reign of Gratian and Valentinian II.;¹ he maintained it when he was confronted by a nobler antagonist, the great Theodosius. He assumed the office of director of the royal conscience, and he administered that office with all the uncompromising moral dignity which had no indulgence for unchristian vices, for injustice, or cruelty, even in an emperor; and with all the stern and conscientious intolerance of one with whom hatred of Paganism and of heresy was a prime article of his creed. The Old and the New Testament met in the person of Ambrose, — the implacable hostility to idolatry, the abhorrence of every deviation from the established formulary of belief; the wise and courageous benevolence, the generous and unselfish devotion to the great interests of humanity.

If Christianity assumed a haughtier and more rigid tone in the conduct and writings of Ambrose, it was by no means forgetful of its gentler duties, in allaying human misery and extending its beneficent care to the utmost bounds of society. With Ambrose, it began its high office of mitigating the horrors of slavery, which now that war raged in turn on every frontier, might seem to threaten individually the whole free population of the empire. Rome, who had drawn new supplies of slaves from almost every frontier of her dominions, now suffered fearful reprisals: her free citizens were sent into captivity, and sold in the markets by the bar-

¹ Theodoret, iv. 7.

barians, whose ancestors had been bought and bartered by her insatiable slave trade. The splendid offerings of piety, the ornaments, even the consecrated vessels of the churches, were prodigally expended by the Bishop of Milan, in the redemption of captives.¹ “The church possesses gold, not to treasure up, but to distribute it for the welfare and happiness of men. We are ransoming the souls of men from eternal perdition. It is not merely the lives of men and the honor of women which are endangered in captivity, but the faith of their children. The blood of redemption which has gleamed in those golden cups has sanctified them, not for the service alone, but for the redemption of man.”² These arguments may be considered as a generous repudiation of the ecclesiastical spirit for the nobler ends of beneficence; and, no doubt, in that mediation of the Church between mankind and the miseries of slavery, which was one of her most constant and useful ministrations during the darker period of human society, the example and authority of Ambrose perpetually encouraged the generosity of the more liberal, and repressed the narrow view of those who considered the consecrated treasures of the church inviolable, even for these more sacred objects.³

The ecclesiastical zeal of Ambrose, like that of Chrysostom, scorned the limits of his own diocese. The see of Sirmium was vacant; Ambrose appeared in that city to prevent the election of an Arian, and to secure the appointment of an orthodox bishop. The

¹ “Numerent quos redemerint templa captivos.” So Ambrose appeals, in excusable pride, to the Heathen orator. — Ambros. Epist. ii. in Symmachum.

² Offic. c. 15, c. 28. Compare Greg. M. Epist. vi. 35; vii. 2, 14.

³ Even Fleury argues that these could not be consecrated vessels

strength of the opposite party lay in the zeal and influence of the empress Justina. Ambrose
A.D. 379. defied both, and made himself a powerful and implacable enemy.

But, for a time, Justina was constrained to suppress her resentment. In a few years, Ambrose
A.D. 383. appears in a new position for a Christian bishop, as the mediator between rival competitors for the empire. The ambassador sent to Maximus (who had assumed the purple in Gaul, and, after the murder of Gratian, might be reasonably suspected of hostile designs on Italy) was no distinguished warrior, or influential civilian; the difficult negotiation was forced upon the bishop of Milan. The character and weight of Ambrose appeared the best protection of the young

Valentinian. Ambrose is said to have re-
A.D. 375. fused to communicate with Maximus, the murderer of his sovereign. The interests of his earthly monarch or of the empire would not induce him to sacrifice for an instant those of his heavenly Master; he would have no fellowship with the man of blood.¹ Yet so completely, either by his ability as a negotiator or by his dignity and sanctity as a prelate, did he overawe the usurper, as to avert the evils of war, and to arrest the hostile invasion of his diocese and of Italy. He succeeded in establishing peace.

But the gratitude of Justina for this essential service could not avert the collision of hostile religious creeds. The empress demanded one of the churches in Milan for the celebration of the Arian service. The first and more modest request named the Porcian Basilica without the gates, but

Dispute with the empress Justina.
¹ The seventeenth Epistle of Ambrose relates the whole transaction, p. 852.

these demands rose to the new and largest edifice within the walls.¹ The answer of Ambrose was firm and distinct; it asserted the inviolability of all property in the possession of the Church: "A bishop cannot alienate that which is dedicated to God." After some fruitless negotiation, the officers of the emperor proceeded to take possession of the Porcian Basilica. Where these buildings had belonged to the state, the emperor might still, perhaps, assert the right of property. Tumults arose: an Arian priest was severely handled, and only rescued from the hands of the populace by the influence of Ambrose. Many wealthy persons were thrown into prison by the Government, and heavy fines exacted on account of these seditions. But the inflexible Ambrose persisted in his refusal to acknowledge the imperial authority over things dedicated to God. When he was commanded to allay the populace, "it is in my power," he answered, "to refrain from exciting their violence, but it is for God to appease it when excited."² The soldiers surrounded the building; they threatened to violate the sanctity of the church in which Ambrose was performing the usual solemnities. The bishop calmly continued his functions, and his undisturbed countenance seemed as if his whole mind was absorbed in its devotion. The soldiers entered the church; the affrighted females began to fly; but the rude and armed men fell on their knees, and assured Ambrose that they came to pray, and not to fight.³ Ambrose ascended the pul-

¹ Paul., Vit. Ambrose. Ambros. Epist. xx.

² "Referebam in meo jure esse, ut non excitarem, in Dei manu, uti mitigaret."

³ It would be curious if we could ascertain the different constitution of the troops employed in the irreverent scenes in the churches of Alexandria and Constantinople, and here at Milan. Were the former raised from the

pit ; his sermon was on the Book of Job ; he enlarged on the conduct of the wife of the patriarch, who commanded him to blaspheme God ; he compared the empress with this example of impiety ; he went on to compare her with Eve, with Jezebel, with Herodias. "The emperor demands a church : what has the emperor to do with the adulteress, the church of the heretics ?" Intelligence arrived that the populace were tearing down the hangings of the church on which was the sacred image of the sovereign, and which had been suspended in the Porcian Basilica, as a sign that the church had been taken into the possession of the emperor. Ambrose sent some of his priests to allay the tumult, but went not himself. He looked triumphantly around on his armed devotees : "The Gentiles have entered into the inheritance of the Lord ; but the armed Gentiles have become Christians and co-heirs of God. My enemies are now my defenders."

A confidential secretary of the emperor appeared, not to expel or degrade the refractory prelate, but to deprecate his *tyranny*. "Why do ye hesitate to strike down *the tyrant* ?" replied Ambrose : "my only defence is in my power of exposing my life for the honor of God." He proceeded with proud humility, "Under the ancient law, priests have bestowed, they have not condescended to assume, empire ; kings have desired the priesthood rather than priests the royal power."

The emperor yields to Ambrose. He appealed to his influence over Maximus, which had averted the invasion of Italy. The imperial authority quailed before the resolute prelate ; the soldiers were withdrawn, the prisoners released,

vicious population of the Eastern cities, the latter partly composed of barbarians ? How much is justly to be attributed to the character of the prelate ?

and the fines annulled.¹ When the emperor himself was urged to confront Ambrose in the church, the timid or prudent youth replied, "His eloquence would compel yourselves to lay me bound hand and foot before his throne." To such a height had the sacerdotal power attained in the West, when wielded by a man of the energy and determination of Ambrose.²

But the pertinacious animosity of the empress was not yet exhausted. A law was passed authorizing the assemblies of the Arians. A second struggle took place; a new triumph for Ambrose, a new defeat for the imperial power. From his inviolable citadel, his church, Ambrose uttered in courageous security his defiance. An emphatic sentence expressed the prelate's notion of the relation of the civil and religious power, and proclaimed the subordination of the emperor within the mysterious circle of sacerdotal authority: "The emperor is of the Church, and in the Church, but not above the Church."

Was it to be supposed that the remonstrances of expiring Paganism would make any impression upon a court thus under subjection to one, who, by exercising the office of protector in the time of peril, assumed the right to dictate on subjects which appeared more completely within his sphere of jurisdiction? If Arianism in the person of the empress was compelled to bow, Paganism could scarcely hope to obtain even a patient hearing.

¹ "Certatim hoc nuntiare milites, irruentes in altaria, osculis significare pacis insigne." Ambrose perceived that God had stricken Lucifer, the great Dragon (*vermem antelucanum*).

² Ambrose relates that one of the officers of the court, more daring than the rest, presumed to resent this outrage, as he considered it, on the emperor. "While I live, dost thou thus treat Valentinian with contempt? I will strike off thy head." Ambrose replied, "God grant that thou mayest fulfil thy menace. I shall suffer the fate of a bishop: thou wilt do the act of an eunuch" (*tu facies, quod spadones*).

We have already related the contest between expiring Polytheism and ascendant Christianity in the persons of Symmachus and of Ambrose. The more polished periods and the gentle dignity of Symmachus might delight the old aristocracy of Rome. But the full flow of the more vehement eloquence of Ambrose, falling into the current of popular opinion at Milan, swept all before it.¹ By this time the Old Testament language and sentiment with regard to idolatry were completely incorporated with the Christian feeling; and, when Ambrose enforced on a Christian emperor the sacred duty of intolerance against opinions and practices which scarcely a century before had been the established religion of the empire, his zeal was supported by almost the unanimous applause of the Christian world.

Ambrose did not rely on his eloquence alone, or on the awfulness of his sacerdotal character, to control the public mind. The champion of the Church was invested by popular belief, perhaps by his own ardent faith, with miraculous power, and the high state of religious excitement was maintained in Milan by the increasing dignity and splendor of the ceremonial, and by the pompous installation of the reliques of saints within the principal church.

¹ The most curious fact relating to Ambrose is the extraordinary contrast between his vigorous, practical, and statesmanlike character as a man, as well as that of such among his writings as may be called public and popular, and the mystic subtlety which fills most of his theological works. He treats the Scripture as one vast allegory, and propounds his own fanciful interpretation, or corollaries, with as much authority as if they were the plain sense of the sacred writer. No retired schoolman follows out the fantastic analogies and recondite significations which he perceives in almost every word, with more vain ingenuity than Ambrose. Every word or number reminds him of every other place in the Scripture in which the same word or number occurs; and, stringing them together with this loose connection, he works out some latent mystic signification, which he would suppose to have been within the intention of the inspired writer. See particularly the *Hexaemeron*.

It cannot escape the observation of a calm inquirer into the history of man, or be disguised by an admirer of a rational, pious, and instructive Christian ministry, that whenever, from this period, the clergy possessed a full and dominant power, the claim to supernatural power is more frequently and ostentatiously made; while, where they possess a less complete ascendancy, miracles cease. While Ambrose was at least availing himself of, if not encouraging, this religious credulity, Chrysostom, partly, no doubt, from his own good sense, partly from respect for the colder and more inquisitive character of his audience, not merely distinctly disavows miraculous powers in his own person, but asserts that long ago they had come to an end.¹ But in Milan the archbishop asserts his belief in, and the eager enthusiasm of the people did not hesitate to embrace as unquestionable truth, the public display of preternatural power in the streets of the city. A dream

¹ Διὰ τοῦτο παρὰ μὲν τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ ἀναξίους χαρίσματα ἐδίδото· χρεῖαν γὰρ εἶχε το παλαιόν, τῆς πίστεως ἕνεκα, ταύτης τῆς βοηθείας· νῦν δὲ οἷδε ἀξίους δίδοται. In Act. vol. iii. 65. Μὴ τοίνυν τὸ μὴ γένεσθαι νῦν σημεῖα, τεκμήριον ποιοῦ τοῦ μὴ γεγενῆσθαι τότε, καὶ γὰρ δὴ τότε χρησίμως ἐγένετο, καὶ νῦν χρησίμως οὐ γίνεται. See the whole passage in Cor. Hom. vi. xi. 45. On Psalm cx., indeed, vol. v. p. 271, he seems to assert the continuance of miracles, particularly during the reign of Julian and of Maximin. But he gives the death of Julian as one of those miracles. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο, καὶ οἱ ἕτερον τὰ σημεῖα ἔπαυσεν ὁ Θεός, in Matt. vii. 375. Compare also vol. i. p. 411; xi. 397, in Coloss.; on Psalm cxlii. vol. v. p. 455. Middleton has dwelt at length on this subject. — Works, vol. i. p. 103.

Augustine denies the continuance of miracles with equal distinctness. "Cum enim Ecclesia Catholica per totum orbem diffusa atque fundata sit, nec miracula illa in nostra tempora durare permissa sunt, ne animus semper visibilia quæreret, et eorum consuetudine frigesceret genus humanum, quorum novitate flagravat." — De Verâ Relig. c. 47. Oper. i. 765. Yet Fleury appeals, and not without ground, to the repeated testimony of St. Augustine, as eye-witness of this miracle; and the reader of St. Augustine's works, even his noblest (see lib. xx. c. 8), the City of God, cannot but call to mind perpetual instances of miraculous occurrences related with unhesitating faith. It is singular how often we hear at one time the strong intellect of Augustine, at another the age of Augustine, speaking in his works.

revealed to the pious prelate the spot, where rested the reliques of the martyrs, SS. Gervaise and Protadius. As they approached the place, a man possessed by a demon was seized with a paroxysm which betrayed his trembling consciousness of the presence of the holy remains. The bones of two men of great stature were found, with much blood.¹ The bodies were disinterred, and conveyed in solemn pomp to the Ambrosian Church. They were re-interred under the altar; they became the tutelary saints of the spot.² A blind butcher, named Severus, recovered his eyesight by the application of a handkerchief, which had touched the reliques; and this was but one of the many wonders which were universally supposed to have been wrought by the smallest article of dress, which had imbibed the miraculous virtue of these sacred bones.

The awe-struck mind was never permitted to repose; more legitimate means were employed to maintain the ardent belief, thus enforced upon the multitude. The whole ceremonial of the Church was conducted by Ambrose with unrivalled solemnity and magnificence. Music was cultivated with the utmost care, some of the noblest hymns of the Latin Church are attributed to Ambrose himself, and the Ambrosian service for a long period distinguished the Church of Milan by the grave dignity and simple fulness of its harmony.³

¹ The Arians denied this miracle. — Ambrose, Epist. xxii. “Invenimus miræ magnitudinis viros duos, ut *prisca ætas ferebat*.” Did Ambrose suppose that the race of men had degenerated in the last two or three centuries? or that the heroes of the faith had been gifted with heroic stature? The sermon of Ambrose is a strange rhapsody, which would only suit an highly excited audience. He acknowledges that these martyrs were unknown, and that the Church of Milan was before barren of reliques.

² “Succedunt victimæ triumphales in locum ubi Christus natus est; sed ille super altare qui pro omnibus passus est; isti sub altari qui illius reveriti sunt passionem;” but Ambrose calls them the guardians and defenders of the Church.

³ This subject will recur at a later part of this volume.

But the sacerdotal dignity of Ambrose might command a feeble boy: he had now to confront the imperial majesty in the person of one of the greatest men who had ever worn the Roman purple. Even in the midst of his irreconcilable feud with the heretical empress, Ambrose had been again entreated to spread the shield of his protection over the youthful emperor. He had undertaken a second embassy to the usurper Maximus. Maximus, as if he feared the awful influence of Ambrose over his mind, refused to admit the priestly ambassador, except to a public audience. Ambrose was considered as condescending from his dignity, in approaching the throne of the emperor. The usurper reproached the prelate for his former interference, by which he had been arrested in his invasion of Italy, and had lost the opportunity of becoming master of the unresisting province. Ambrose answered with pardonable pride, that he accepted the honorable accusation of having saved the orphan emperor. He then arrayed himself, as it were, in his priestly inviolability, reproached Maximus with the murder of Gratian, and demanded his remains. He again refused all spiritual communion with one guilty of innocent blood, for which as yet he had submitted to no ecclesiastical penance. Maximus, as might have been expected, drove from his court the daring prelate, who had thus stretched to the utmost the sanctity of person attributed to an ambassador and a bishop. Ambrose, however, returned not merely safe, but without insult or outrage, to his Italian diocese.¹

The arms of Theodosius decided the contest, and secured the trembling throne of Valentinian the younger. But the accession of Theodo-

Second embassy to Maximus.

Accession of Theodosius. A.D. 388.

¹ Epist. xxiv

sus, instead of obscuring the rival pretensions of the Church to power and influence, seemed to confirm and strengthen them. That such a mind as that of Theodosius should submit with humility to ecclesiastical remonstrance and discipline tended no doubt, beyond all other events, to overawe mankind. Everywhere else throughout the Roman world, the state, and even the Church, bowed at the foot of Theodosius; in Milan alone, in the height of his power, he was confronted and subdued by the more commanding mind and religious majesty of Ambrose. His justice as well as his dignity quailed beneath the ascendancy of the prelate.

Jewish synagogue destroyed. A synagogue of the Jews at Callinicum, in Osroene, had been burned by the Christians, it was said, at the instigation, if not under the actual sanction of the bishop. The church of the Valentinian Gnostics had likewise been destroyed and plundered by the zeal of some monks. Theodosius commanded the restoration of the synagogue at the expense of the Christians, and fair compensation to the heretical Valentinians for their losses.

The pious indignation of Ambrose was not restrained either by the remoteness of these transactions from the scene of his own labors or by the undeniable violence of the Christian party. He stood forward, Conduct of Ambrose. designated, it might seem, by his situation and character, as the acknowledged champion of the whole of Christianity; the sacerdotal power was embodied in his person. In a letter to the emperor, he boldly vindicated the bishop; he declared himself, as far as his approbation could make him so, an accomplice in the glorious and holy crime. If martyrdom was the consequence, he claimed the honor of that martyrdom; he declared it to be utterly irreconcila-

ble with Christianity, that it should in any way contribute to the restoration of Jewish or heretical worship.¹ If the bishop should comply with the mandate, he would be an apostate, and the emperor would be answerable for his apostasy. This act was but a slight and insufficient retaliation for the deeds of plunder and destruction perpetrated by the Jews and heretics against orthodox Christians. The letter of Ambrose did not produce the desired effect; but the bishop renewed his address in public in the church, and at length extorted from the emperor the impunity of the offenders. Then, and not till then, he condescended to approach the altar, and to proceed with the service of God.

Ambrose felt his strength; he feared not to assert that superiority of the altar over the throne which was a fundamental maxim of his Christianity. There is no reason to ascribe to ostentation, or to sacerdotal ambition, rather than to the profound conviction of his mind, the dignity which he vindicated for the priesthood, the authority supreme and without appeal in all things which related to the ceremonial of religion. Theodosius endured, and the people applauded, the public exclusion of the emperor from within the impassable rails, which fenced off the officiating priesthood from the profane laity. An exemption had

¹ "Hac propositâ conditione, puto dicturum episcopum, quòd ipse ignes sparserit, turbas compulerit, populos concluderit, ne amittat occasionem martyrii, ut pro invalidis subiciat validiorem. O beatum mendacium quo acquiritur sibi aliorum absolutio, sui gratia. Hoc est, Imperator, quod poposci et ego, ut in me magis vindicares, et hoc si crimen putares mihi adscriberes. Quid mandas in absentes iudicium? Habes præsentem, habes confitentem reum. Proclamo, quod ego synagogam incenderim, certè quod ego illis mandaverim, ne esset locus, in quo Christus negaretur. Si obiiciatur mihi, cur hic non incenderim? Divino jam cœpit cremari iudicio; meum cessavit opus." — Epist. xxiv. p. 561.

usually been made for the sacred person of the emperor, and, according to this usage, Theodosius ventured within the forbidden precincts. Ambrose, with lofty courtesy, pointed to the seat or throne reserved for the emperor, at the head of the laity. Theodosius submitted to the rebuke, and withdrew to the lowlier station.

But if these acts of Ambrose might to some appear unwise or unwarrantable aggressions on the dignity of the civil magistrate, or if to the prophetic sagacity of others they might foreshow the growth of an enormous and irresponsible authority, and awaken well-grounded apprehension or jealousy, the Roman world could not withhold its admiration from another act of the Milanese prelate. It could not but hail the appearance of a new moral power, enlisted on the side of humanity and justice, — a power which could bow the loftiest, as well as the meanest, under its dominion. For the first time since the establishment of the imperial despotism, the voice of a subject was heard in deliberate, public, and authoritative condemnation of a deed of atrocious tyranny and sanguinary vengeance; for the first time, an Emperor of Rome trembled before public opinion, and humbled himself to a contrite confession of guilt and cruelty.

With all his wisdom and virtue, Theodosius was liable to paroxysms of furious and ungovernable anger. A dispute had arisen in Thessalonica about a favorite charioteer in the circus; out of the dispute, a sedition, in which some lives were lost. The imperial officers, who interfered to suppress the fray, were wounded or slain, and Botheric, the representative of the emperor, treated with indignity. Notwithstanding every attempt on the part of the clergy to

Massacre of
Thessalonica.
A.D. 390.

allay the furious resentment of Theodosius, the counsels of the more violent advisers prevailed. Secret orders were issued; the circus, filled with the whole population of the city, was surrounded by troops, and a general and indiscriminate massacre of all ages and sexes, the guilty and the innocent, revenged the insult on the imperial dignity. Seven thousand lives were sacrificed in this remorseless carnage.

On the first intelligence of this atrocity, Ambrose, with prudent self-command, kept aloof from the exasperated emperor. He retired into the country, and a letter from his own hand was delivered to the sovereign. The letter expressed the horror of Ambrose and his brother bishops at this inhuman deed, in which he should consider himself an accomplice if he could refrain from expressing his detestation of its guilt; if he should not refuse to communicate with a man stained with the innocent blood, not of one, but of thousands. He exhorts Theodosius to penitence; he promises to offer prayers in his behalf. He acted up to his declaration; the emperor of the world found the doors of the church closed against him. For eight months he endured this ignominious exclusion. Even on the sacred day of the Nativity, Theodosius implored in vain to be admitted within those precincts which were open to the slave and to the beggar,—those precincts which were the vestibule to heaven, for through the Church alone was heaven to be approached. Submission and remonstrance were alike in vain: to an urgent minister of the sovereign, Ambrose calmly replied, that the emperor might kill him, and pass over his body into the sanctuary.

At length Ambrose consented to admit the emperor to an audience; with difficulty he was persuaded to

permit him to enter, not into the church itself, but into the outer porch, the place of the public penitents. At length the interdict was removed on two conditions, — that the emperor should issue an edict prohibiting the execution of capital punishments for thirty days after conviction, and that he should submit to public penance. Stripped of his imperial ornaments, prostrate on the pavement, beating his breast, tearing his hair, watering the ground with his tears, the master of the Roman empire, the conqueror in so many victories, the legislator of the world, at length received the hard-wrung absolution.

This was the culminating point of pure Christian influence. Christianity appeared before the world as the champion and vindicator of outraged humanity; as having founded a tribunal of justice, which extended its protective authority over the meanest, and suspended its retributive penalties over the mightiest, of mankind.

Nearly at the same time (about four years before) had been revealed the latent danger from this new unlimited sovereignty over the human mind. *The first blood was judicially shed for religious opinion.* Far, however, from apprehending the fatal consequences which might arise out of their own exclusive and intolerant sentiments, or foreseeing that the sacerdotal authority, which they fondly and sincerely supposed they were strengthening for the unalloyed welfare of mankind, would seize and wield the sword of persecution with such remorseless and unscrupulous severity, this first fatal libation of Christian blood, which was the act of an usurping emperor and of a few foreign bishops, was solemnly disclaimed by all the more influential dignitaries of

First capital
punishment
for religion.
A.D. 385.

the Western Church. Priscillian, a noble and eloquent Spaniard, had embraced some Manichean or rather Gnostic opinions. The same Priscillian and his followers. contradictory accusations of the severest asceticism and of licentious habits, which were so perpetually adduced against the Manicheans, formed the chief charge against Priscillian and his followers. The leaders of the sect had taken refuge, from the persecutions of their countrymen, in Gaul, and propagated their opinions to some extent in Aquitaine. They were pursued with unwearied animosity by the Spanish bishops Ithacius and Idacius. Maximus, the usurping emperor of Gaul, who then resided at Treves, took cognizance of the case. In vain the Martin of Tours. celebrated Martin of Tours, whose life was almost an unwearied campaign against idolatry, and whose unrelenting hand had demolished every religious edifice within his reach,—a prelate whose dread of heresy was almost as sensitive as of Paganism,—urged his protest against these proceedings with all the vehemence of his character. During his absence, a capital sentence was extorted from the emperor; Priscillian and some of his followers were put to death by the civil authority for the crime of religious error. The fatal precedent was disowned by the general voice of Christianity. It required another considerable period of ignorance and bigotry to deaden the fine moral sense of Christianity to the total abandonment of its spirit of love. When Ambrose Conduct of Ambrose. reproached the usurper with the murder of his sovereign Gratian, he reminded him likewise of the unjust execution of the Priscillianists; he refused to communicate with the bishops who had any

concern in that sanguinary and unchristian transaction.¹

Ambrose witnessed and lamented the death of the young Valentinian, over whom he pronounced a funeral oration. On the usurpation of the Pagan Eugenius, he fled from Milan; but returned to behold and to applaud the triumph of Theodosius. The conquering emperor gave a new proof of his homage to Christianity and to its representative. Under the influence of Ambrose, he refrained for a time from communicating in the Christian mysteries, because his hands were stained with blood, though that blood had been shed in a just and necessary war.² To Ambrose the dying emperor commended his sons, and the Bishop of Milan pronounced the funeral oration over the last great emperor of the world.

He did not long survive his imperial friend. It is related, that, when Ambrose was on his death-bed, Stilicho, apprehending the loss of such a man to Italy and to Christendom, urged the principal inhabitants of Milan to entreat the effective prayers of the bishop for his own recovery. "I have not so lived among you," replied Ambrose, "as to be ashamed to live; I have so good a Master, that I am not afraid to die." Ambrose expired in the attitude and in the act of prayer.

While Ambrose was thus assuming an unprecedented supremacy over his own age, and deepening and strengthening the foundation of the ecclesiastical power, Augustine was beginning gradually to con-

¹ Ambros. Epist. xxiv. The whole transaction in Sulpicius Sever., E. H. and Life of St. Martin.

² Oratio de Obitu Theodos. 34.

summate that total change in human opinion which was to influence the Christianity of the remotest ages.

Of all Christian writers since the apostles, Augustine has maintained the most permanent and extensive influence. That influence, indeed, ^{Augustine.} was unfelt, or scarcely felt, in the East; but as the East gradually became more estranged, till it was little more than a blank in Christian history, the dominion of Augustine over the opinions of the Western world was eventually over the whole of Christendom. Basil and Chrysostom spoke a language foreign or dead to the greater part of the Christian world. The Greek empire, after the reign of Justinian, gradually contracting its limits and sinking into abject superstition, forgot its own great writers on the more momentous subjects of religion and morality, for new controversialists on frivolous and insignificant points of difference. The more important feuds, as of Nestorianism, made little progress in the West; the West repudiated almost with one voice the iconoclastic opinions; and at length Mohammedanism swept away its fairest provinces, and limited the Greek Church to a still narrowing circle. The Latin language thus became almost that of Christianity; Latin writers, the sole authority to which men appealed, or from which they imperceptibly imbibed the tone of religious doctrine or sentiment. Of these, Augustine was the most universal, the most commanding, the most influential.

The earliest Christian writers had not been able or willing altogether to decline some of the more obvious and prominent points of the Augustinian theology; but in his works they were first wrought up into a regular system. Abstruse topics, which had been but

slightly touched, or dimly hinted in the apostolic writings, and of which the older creeds had been entirely silent, became the prominent and unavoidable tenets of Christian doctrine. Augustinianism has constantly revived, in all its strongest and most peremptory statements, in every period of religious excitement. In later days, it formed much of the doctrinal system of Luther; it was worked up into a still more rigid and uncompromising system by the severe intellect of Calvin; it was remoulded into the Roman Catholic doctrine by Jansenius: the popular theology of most of the Protestant sects is but a modified Augustinianism.

Christianity had now accomplished its divine mission, so far as impregnating the Roman world with its first principles,—the unity of God, the immortality of the soul, and future retribution. These vital questions between the old Paganism and the new religion had been decided by their almost general adoption into the common sentiments of mankind. And now questions naturally and necessarily arising out of the providential government of that Supreme Deity, out of that conscious immortality, and out of that acknowledged retribution, had begun profoundly to agitate the human heart. The nature of man had been stirred in its inmost depths. The hopes and fears, now centred on another state of being, were ever restlessly hovering over the abyss into which they were forced to gaze. As men were not merely convinced, but deeply penetrated, with the belief that they had souls to be saved, the means, the process, the degree of attainable assurance concerning salvation, became subjects of anxious inquiry. Every kind of information on these momentous topics was demanded with importunity, and hailed with eagerness.

Augustinian
theology.

With the ancient philosophy, the moral condition of man was a much simpler and calmer subject of consideration. It could coldly analyze every emotion, trace the workings of every passion, and present its results; if in eloquent language, kindling the mind of the hearer, rather by that language, than by the excitement of the inquiry. It was the attractive form of the philosophy, the adventitious emotion produced by bold paradox, happy invention, acute dialectics, which amused and partially enlightened the inquisitive mind. But now, mingled up with religion, every sensation, every feeling, every propensity, every thought, had become not merely a symptom of the moral condition, but an element in that state of spiritual advancement or deterioration which was to be weighed and examined in the day of Judgment. The ultimate and avowed object of philosophy, the *summum bonum*, the greatest attainable happiness, shrunk into an unimportant consideration. These were questions of spiritual life and death, and the solution was therefore embraced rather by the will and the passions, than by the cool and sober reason. This solution in all these difficulties was the more acceptable in proportion as it was peremptory and dogmatic. Any thing could be endured rather than uncertainty; and Augustine himself was, doubtless, urged more by the desire of peace to his own anxious spirit than by the ambition of dictating to Christianity on these abstruse topics. The influence of Augustine thus concentrated the Christian mind on subjects to which Christianity led, but did not answer with fulness or precision. The Gospels and apostolic writings paused within the border of attainable human knowledge: Augustine fearlessly rushed forward, or was driven by his antago-

nists; and partly from the reasonings of a new religious philosophy, partly by general inferences from limited and particular phrases in the sacred writings, framed a complete, it must be acknowledged, and as far as its own consistency, an harmonious system, but of which it was the inevitable tendency to give an overpowering importance to problems on which Christianity, wisely measuring, it should seem, the capacity of the human mind, had declined to utter any final or authoritative decrees. Almost up to this period in Christian history,¹ on these mysterious topics, all was unquestioned and undefined; and though they could not but cross the path of Christian reasoning, and could not but be incidentally noticed, they had, as yet, undergone no full or direct investigation. Nothing but the calmest and firmest philosophy could have avoided or eluded these points, on which, though the human mind could not attain to knowledge, it was impatient of ignorance. The immediate or more remote, the direct or indirect, the sensible or the imperceptible, influence of the divine agency (grace) on the human soul, with the inseparable consequences of necessity and free-will, thus became the absorbing and agitating points of Christian doctrine. From many causes, these inevitable questions had forced themselves, at this period, on the general attention. Manicheism on one hand, Pelagianism on the other, stirred up their darkest depths. The Christian mind demanded on all these topics at once excitement and rest. Nothing could be more acceptable than the unhesitating and peremptory decisions of Augustine. His profound piety ministered perpetual emotion; his

¹ In the *Historia Pelagiana* of Vossius may be found quotations expressive of the sentiments of the earlier Fathers on many of these points.

glowing and perspicuous language, his confident dogmatism, and the apparent completeness of his system, offered repose.

But the primary principle of the Augustinian theology was already deeply rooted in the awe-struck piety of the Christian world. In this state of the general mind, that which brought the Deity more directly and more perpetually in contact with the soul, at once enlisted all minds which were under the shadow of religious fears, or softened by any milder religious feeling. It was not a remote supremacy, a government through unseen and untraceable influences, a general reverential trust in the divine protection, which gave satisfaction to the agitated spirit; but an actually felt and immediate presence, operating on each particular and most minute part of the creation; not a regular and unvarying emanation of the divine will, but a special and peculiar intervention in each separate case. The whole course of human events, and the moral condition of each individual, were alike under the acknowledged, or conscious and direct, operation of the Deity. But the more distinct and unquestioned this principle, the more the problem which in a different form had agitated the Eastern world,—the origin of evil,—forced itself on the consideration. In the East, it had taken a kind of speculative or theogonical turn, and allied itself with physical notions: in the West, it became a moral and practical, and almost every-day question, involving the prescience of God and the freedom of the human soul. Augustine had rejected Manicheism; the antagonistic and equally conflicting powers of that system had offended his high conception of the supremacy of God. Still, his earlier Manicheism lent an unconscious

coloring to his maturer opinions. In another form, he divided the world into regions of cloudless light and total darkness. But he did not mingle the Deity in any way in the darkness which enveloped the whole of mankind, a chosen portion of which alone were rescued by the gracious intervention of the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit. The rest were separated by an insuperable barrier, that of hereditary evil; they bore within the fatal and inevitable proscription. Within the pale of Election was the world of Light; without, the world of Perdition; and the human soul was so reduced to a subordinate agent before the mysterious and inscrutable power, which, by the infusion of faith, rescued it from its inveterate hereditary propensity, as to become entirely passive, altogether annihilated, in overleaping the profound though narrow gulf which divided the two kingdoms of Grace and of Perdition.

Thus that system which assigned the most unbounded and universal influence to the Deity was seized upon by devout piety as the truth which it would be an impious limitation of Omnipotence to question. Man offered his free agency on the altar of his religion, and forgot that he thereby degraded the most wonderful work of Omnipotence, a being endowed with free agency. While the internal consciousness was not received as sufficient evidence of the freedom of the will, it was considered as unquestionable testimony to the operations of divine grace.

At all events, these questions now became unavoidable articles of the Christian faith. From this time the simpler Apostolic Creed, and the splendid amplifications of the divine attributes of the Trinity, were enlarged, if not by stern definitions, by dictatorial

axioms on original sin, on grace, predestination, the total depravity of mankind, election to everlasting life, and final reprobation. To the appellations which awoke what was considered righteous and legitimate hatred in all true believers,—Arianism and Manicheism,—was now added, as a term of equal obloquy, Pelagianism.¹

¹ The doctrines of Pelagius have been represented as arising out of the monastic spirit, or at least out of one form of its influence. The high ideal of moral perfection (it has been said) which the monk set before himself, the conscious strength of will which was necessary to aspire to that height, the proud impatience and disdain of the ordinary excuse for infirmity, the inherited weakness and depravity of human nature, induced the colder and more severe Pelagius to embrace his peculiar tenets,—the rejection of original sin, the assertion of the entire freedom of the will, the denial or limitation of the influence of divine grace. Of the personal history of Pelagius little is known, except that he was a British or French monk (his name is said, in one tradition, to have been Morgan), but neither he nor his colleague Cælestius appears to have been a secluded ascetic: they dwelt in Rome for some time, where they propagated their doctrines. Of his character perhaps still less is known, unless from his tenets, and some fragments of his writings, preserved by his adversaries; excepting that the blamelessness of his manners is admitted by his adversaries (the term “*egregiè Christianus*” is the expression of St. Augustine); and even the violent Jerome bears testimony to his innocence of life.

But the tenets of Augustine appear to flow more directly from the monastic system. His doctrines (in his controversy with Pelagius, for in his other writings he holds another tone) are tinged with the Encratite or Manichean notion, that there was a *physical* transmission of sin in the propagation of children, even in lawful marriage. (See, among other writers, Jer. Taylor's *Vindication of his Deus Justificatus*.) Even this “*concupiscentia carnis peccatum est, quia inest illi inobedientia contra dominatum mentis*.”—*De Pecc. Remis.* i. 3. This is the old doctrine of the inherent evil of matter. We are astonished that Augustine, who had been a father, and a fond father, though of an illegitimate son, could be driven, by the stern logic of polemics, to the damnation of unbaptized infants,—a *milder* damnation, it is true, to eternal fire. This was the more genuine doctrine of men in whose hearts all the sweet charities of life had been long seared up by monastic discipline; men like Fulgentius, to whose name the title of saint is prefixed, and who lays down this benignant and Christian axiom: “*Firmissimè tene et nullatenus dubites, parvulos, sive in uteris matrum vivere incipiunt, et ibi moriuntur, sive cum de matribus nati, sine sacramento sancto baptismatis de hoc seculo transeunt, ignis æterni sempiterno supplicio puniendos*.”—Fulgentius *de Fide*, quoted in Vossius, *Hist. Pelag.* p. 257.

The assertion of the entire freedom of the will, and the restricted sense in

Augustine, by the extraordinary adaptation of his genius to his own age, the comprehensive grandeur of his views, the intense earnestness of his character, his inexhaustible activity, the vigor, warmth, and perspicuity of his style, had a right to command the homage of Western Christendom. He was at once the first universal, and the purest and most powerful of the Latin Christian writers. It is singular that almost all the earlier Christian authors in the West were provincials chiefly of Africa. But the works of Tertullian were, in general, brief treatises on temporary subjects of controversy; if enlivened by the natural vehemence and strength of the man, disfigured by the worst barbarisms of style. The writings of Cyprian were chiefly short epistles or treatises on subjects of immediate or local interest. Augustine retained the fervor and energy of the African style with much purer and more perspicuous Latinity. His ardent imagination was tempered by reasoning powers which boldly grappled with every subject. He possessed and was unembarrassed by the possession of all the knowledge which had been accumulated in the Roman world. He commanded the whole range of Latin literature; and perhaps his influence over his own hemisphere was not diminished by his ignorance, or at best imperfect and

which Pelagius appears to have received the doctrine of divine grace, confining it to the influences of the divine revelation, appear to arise out of philosophical reasonings rather than out of the monastic spirit. The severe monastic discipline was more likely to infuse the sense of the slavery of the will; and the brooding over bodily and mental emotions, the general cause and result of the monastic spirit, would tend to exaggerate, rather than to question or limit, the actual and even sensible workings of the divine spirit within the soul. The calmer temperament, indeed, and probably more peaceful religious development of Pelagius, may have disposed him to his system; as the more vehement character and agitated religious life of Augustine to his vindication, founded on his internal experience, of the constant divine agency upon the heart and the soul.

late-acquired acquaintance with Greek.¹ But all his knowledge and all his acquirements fell into the train of his absorbing religious sentiments or passions. On the subjects with which he was conversant, a calm and dispassionate philosophy would have been indignantly repudiated by the Christian mind, and Augustine's temperament was too much in harmony with that of the time to offend by deficiency in fervor. It was profound religious agitation, not cold and abstract truth, which the age required; the emotions of piety, rather than the convictions of severe logical inquiry; and in Augustine, the depth or abstruseness of the matter never extinguished or allayed the passion, or, in one sense, the popularity of his style. At different periods of his life, Augustine aspired to and succeeded in enthralling all the various powers and faculties of the human mind. That life was the type of his theology; and as it passed through its various changes of age, of circumstance, and of opinion, it left its own impressions strongly and permanently stamped upon the whole of Latin Christianity. The gentleness of his childhood, the passions of his youth, the studies of his adolescence, the wilder dreams of his immature Christianity, the Manicheism, the intermediate stage of Platonism, through which he passed into orthodoxy, the fervor with which he embraced, the vigor with which he developed, the unhesitating confidence with which he enforced his final creed,—all affected more or less the general mind. His Confessions became the manual of all those who were forced by their temperament or inclined by their disposition

¹ On St. Augustine's knowledge of Greek, compare Tillemont, in his *Life*, p. 7. Punic was still spoken by the common people in the neighborhood of Carthage.

to brood over the inward sensations of their own minds ; to trace within themselves all the trepidations, the misgivings, the agonies, the exultations, of the religious conscience ; the gradual formation of opinions till they harden into dogmas, or warm into objects of ardent passion. Since Augustine, this internal autobiography of the soul has always had the deepest interest for those of strong religious convictions : it was what multitudes had felt, but no one had yet embodied in words ; it was the appalling yet attractive manner in which men beheld all the conflicts and adventures of their own spiritual life reflected with bold and speaking truth. Men shrunk from the divine and unapproachable image of Christian perfection in the life of the Redeemer, to the more earthly, more familiar picture of the development of the Christian character, crossed with the light and shade of human weakness and human passion.

The religious was more eventful than the civil life of St. Augustine. He was born A.D. 354, in Tagasta, an episcopal city of Numidia. His parents were Christians of respectable rank. In his childhood, he was attacked by a dangerous illness ; he entreated to be baptized. His mother, Monica, took the alarm ; all was prepared for that solemn ceremony ; but, on his recovery, it was deferred, and Augustine remained for some years in the humbler rank of catechumen. He received the best education, in grammar and rhetoric, which the neighboring city of Madaura could afford. At seventeen, he was sent to Carthage to finish his studies. Augustine has, perhaps, highly colored both the idleness of his period of study in Madaura, and the licentious habits to which he abandoned himself in the dissolute city of Carthage.

A.D. 371.

His ardent mind plunged into the intoxicating enjoyments of the theatre, and his excited passions demanded every kind of gratification. He had a natural son, called by the somewhat inappropriate name A-deo datus. He was first arrested in his sensual course, not by the solemn voice of religion, but by the gentler remonstrances of Pagan literature. He learned from Cicero, not from the Gospel, the higher dignity of intellectual attainments. From his brilliant success in his studies, it is clear that his life, if yielding at times to the temptations of youth, was not a course of indolence or total abandonment to pleasure. It was the Hortensius of Cicero which awoke his mind to nobler aspirations and to the contempt of worldly enjoyments.

But philosophy could not satisfy the lofty desires which it had awakened: Augustine panted for some better hopes, and more satisfactory objects of study. He turned to the religion of his parents, but his mind was not subdued to a feeling for the inimitable beauty of the New Testament. Its simplicity of style appeared rude, after the stately march of Tully's eloquence. But Manicheism seized at once upon his kindled imagination. For nine years, from the age of nineteen to twenty-eight, the mind of Augustine wandered among the vague and fantastic reveries of Oriental theology. The virtuous and holy Monica, with the anxious apprehensions and prescient hopes of a mother's heart, watched over the irregular development of his powerful faculties. Her distress at his Manichean errors was consoled by an aged bishop, who had himself been involved in the same opinions. "Be of good cheer: the child of so many tears cannot perish." The step against which she remonstrated most strongly, led

to that result which she scarcely dared to hope. Augustine grew discontented with the wild Manichean doctrines, which neither satisfied the religious yearnings of his heart nor the philosophical demands of his understanding. He was in danger of falling into a desperate Pyrrhonism, or at best the proud indifference of an Academic. He determined to seek a more distinguished sphere for his talents as a teacher of rhetoric; and, notwithstanding his mother's tears, he

A.D. 383.
Ætat. 20.

left Carthage for Rome. The fame of his abilities obtained him an invitation to teach at Milan. He was there within the magic circle of the great ecclesiastic of the West. But we cannot pause to trace the throes and pangs of his

A.D. 385.

final conversion. The writings of St. Paul accomplished what the eloquence of Ambrose had begun. In one of the paroxysms of his religious agony, he seemed to hear a voice from heaven,—“Take and read, take and read.” Till now he had rejected the writings of the apostle; he opened on the passage which contains the awful denunciations of Paul against the dissolute morals of the Heathen. The conscience of Augustine recognized “in the chambering and wantonness” the fearful picture of his own life; for, though he had abandoned the looser indulgences of his youth (he had lived in strict fidelity, not to a lawful wife indeed, but to a concubine), even his mother was anxious to disengage him, by an honorable marriage, from the bonds of a less legitimate connection. But he burst at once his thralldom; shook his old nature from his heart; renounced for ever all, even lawful indulgences, of the carnal desires; forswore the world, and withdrew himself, though without exciting any unnecessary astonishment among his hearers, from his

profaner function as teacher of rhetoric. His mother, who had followed him to Milan, lived to witness his baptism as a Catholic Christian by the hands of Ambrose; and, in all the serene happiness of her accomplished hopes and prayers, expired in his arms before his return to Africa. His son, Adeodatus, who died a few years afterwards, was baptized at the same time.

To return to the writings of St. Augustine, or rather to his life in his writings. In his controversial treatises against the Manicheans and against Pelagius, Augustine had the power of seemingly, at least, bringing down those abstruse subjects to popular comprehension. His vehement and intrepid dogmatism hurried along the unresisting mind, which was allowed no pause for the sober examination of difficulties, or was awed into acquiescence by the still-suspended charge of impiety. The imagination was at the same time kept awake by a rich vein of allegoric interpretation, dictated by the same bold decision, and enforced as necessary conclusions from the sacred writings, or as latent truths intentionally wrapped up in those mysterious phrases.

The City of God was unquestionably the noblest work, both in its original design and in the fulness of its elaborate execution, which the genius of man had as yet contributed to the support of Christianity. Hitherto the Apologies had been framed to meet particular exigences: they were either brief and pregnant statements of the Christian doctrines; refutations of prevalent calumnies; invectives against the follies and crimes of Paganism; or confutations of anti-Christian works like those of Celsus, Porphyry, or Julian, closely following their course of

Baptism of
Augustine.
A.D. 387.

Controversial
writings.

City of God.

argument, and rarely expanding into general and comprehensive views of the great conflict. The City of God, in the first place, indeed, was designed to decide for ever the one great question, which alone kept in suspense the balance between Paganism and Christianity, the connection between the fall of the empire and the miseries under which the whole Roman society was groaning, with the desertion of the ancient religion of Rome. Even this part of his theme led Augustine into a full, and, if not impartial, yet far more comprehensive survey of the whole religion and philosophy of antiquity than had been yet displayed in any Christian work. It has preserved more on some branches of these subjects than the whole surviving Latin literature. The City of God was not merely a defence, it was likewise an exposition, of Christian doctrine. The last twelve books developed the whole system with a regularity and copiousness, as far as we know, never before attempted by any Christian writer. It was the first complete Christian theology.

The immediate occasion of this important work of Augustine was worthy of this powerful concentration of his talents and knowledge. The capture of Rome by the Goths had appalled the whole empire. So long as the barbarians only broke through the frontiers, or severed province after province from the dominion of the emperor, men could close their eyes to the gradual declension and decay of the Roman supremacy; and, in the rapid alternations of power, the empire, under some new Cæsar or Constantine, might again throw back the barbaric inroads; or where the barbarians were settled within the frontiers, awe them into peaceful subjects, or array them as valiant defenders of their dominions.

A.D. 410.

Occasion of
its composition.

As long as both Romes, more especially the ancient city of the West, remained inviolate, so long the fabric of the Roman greatness seemed unbroken, and she might still assert her title as Mistress of the World. The capture of Rome dissipated for ever these proud illusions; it struck the Roman world to the heart; and in the mortal agony of the old social system, men wildly grasped at every cause which could account for this unexpected, this inexplicable, phenomenon. They were as much overwhelmed with dread and wonder as if there had been no previous omens of decay, no slow and progressive approach to the sacred walls; as if the fate of the city had not been already twice suspended by the venality, the mercy, or the prudence of the conqueror. Murmurs were again heard impeaching the new religion as the cause of this disastrous consummation: the deserted gods had deserted in their turn the apostate city.¹

There seems no doubt that Pagan ceremonies took place in the hour of peril, to avert, if possible, the imminent ruin. The respect paid by the barbarians to the churches might, in the zealous or even the wavering votaries of Paganism, strengthen the feeling of some remote connection between the destroyer of the civil power and the destroyer of the ancient religions. The Roman aristocracy, which fled to different parts of the world, more particularly to the yet peaceful and uninvaded province of Africa, and among whom the feelings of attachment to the institu-

¹ Orosius attempted the same theme: the Pagans, he asserts, "*præsentia tantum tempora, veluti malis extra solitum infestissima, ob hoc solum, quod creditur Christus, et colitur, idola autem minus coluntur, infamant.*" Heyne has well observed on this work of Orosius, "*Excitaverat Augustini vibrantis arma exemplum Orosium, discipulum, ut et ipse arma sumeret, et in bellibus manibus.*" - *Opuscula*, vi. p. 130.

tions and to the gods of Rome were still the strongest, were not likely to suppress the language of indignation and sorrow, or to refrain from the extenuation of their own cowardice and effeminacy, by ascribing the fate of the city to the irresistible power of the alienated deities.

Augustine dedicated thirteen years to the completion of this work, which was for ever to determine this solemn question, and to silence the last murmurs of expiring Paganism. The City of God is at once the funeral oration of the ancient society and the gratulatory panegyric on the birth of the new. It acknowledged, it triumphed in, the irrevocable fall of the Babylon of the West, the shrine of idolatry; it hailed at the same time the universal dominion which awaited the new theocratic policy. The earthly city had undergone its predestined fate; it had passed away with all its vices and superstitions, with all its virtues and its glories (for the soul of Augustine was not dead to the noble reminiscences of Roman greatness), with its false gods and its Heathen sacrifices. Its doom was sealed, and for ever. But in its place had arisen the City of God, the Church of Christ; a new social system had emerged from the ashes of the old; that system was founded by God, was ruled by divine laws, and had the divine promise of perpetuity.

The first ten books of the City of God are devoted to the question of the connection between the prosperity and the religion of Rome; five of them to the influence of Paganism in this world; five to that in the world to come. Augustine appeals in the five first to the mercy shown by the conqueror as the triumph of Christianity. Had the *Pagan* Radagaisus

taken Rome, not a life would have been spared, no place would have been sacred. The *Christian* Alaric had been checked and overawed by the sanctity of the Christian character and his respect for his Christian brethren. He denies that worldly prosperity is an unerring sign of the divine favor; he denies the exemption of the older Romans from disgrace and distress, and recapitulates the crimes and the calamities of their history during their worship of their ancient gods. He ascribes their former glory to their valor; their frugality, their contempt of wealth, their fortitude, and their domestic virtues; he assigns their vices, their frightful profligacy of manners, their pride, their luxury, their effeminacy, as the proximate causes of their ruin. Even in their ruin, they could not forget their dissolute amusements; the theatres of Carthage were crowded with the fugitives from Rome. In the five following books, he examines the pretensions of Heathenism to secure felicity in the world to come; he dismisses with contempt the old popular religion, but seems to consider the philosophic Theism, the mystic Platonism of the later period, a worthier antagonist. He puts forth all his subtlety and power in refutation of these tenets.

The last twelve books place in contrast the origin, the pretensions, the fate, of the new city, that of God. He enters at large into the evidences of Christianity; he describes the sanctifying effects of the faith; but pours forth all the riches of his imagination and eloquence on the destinies of the Church at the resurrection. Augustine had no vision of the worldly power of the new city; he foresaw not the spiritual empire of Rome which would replace the new fallen Rome of Heathenism. With him the triumph of

Christianity is not complete till the world itself, not merely its outward framework of society and the constitution of its kingdoms, has experienced a total change. In the description of the final kingdom of Christ, he treads his way with great dexterity and address between the grosser notions of the Millenarians, with their kingdom of earthly wealth and power and luxury (this he repudiates with devout abhorrence); and that finer and subtler spiritualism, which is ever approaching to Pantheism, and, by the rejection of the bodily resurrection, renders the existence of the disembodied spirit too fine and impalpable for the general apprehension.

The uneventful personal life of St. Augustine, at least till towards its close, contrasts with that of Ambrose and that of Chrysostom. After the first throes and travail of his religious life, described with such dramatic fidelity in his Confessions, he subsided into a peaceful bishop in a remote and rather inconsiderable town.¹ He had not, like Ambrose, to interpose between rival emperors, or to rule the conscience of the universal sovereign. He had not, like Chrysostom, to enter into a perilous conflict with the vices of a capital and the intrigues of a court. Forced by the devout admiration of the people to assume the episcopate in the city of Hippo, he was faithful to his first bride, his earliest though humble see. Not that his life was that of contemplative inactivity, or tranquil literary exertion: his personal conferences with the leaders of the Donatists, the Manicheans, the Arians, and Pelagians, and his presence in the councils of Carthage, displayed his

¹ He was thirty-five before he was ordained presbyter, A.D. 389; he was chosen co-adjutor to the Bishop of Hippo, A.D. 395.

power of dealing with men. His letter to Count Boniface showed that he was not unconcerned with the public affairs; and his former connection with Boniface, who at one time had expressed his determination to embrace the monastic life, might warrant his remonstrance against the fatal revolt which involved Boniface and Africa in ruin.

At the close of his comparatively peaceful life, Augustine was exposed to the trial of his severe and lofty principles. His faith and his superiority to the world were brought to the test in the fearful calamities which desolated the whole African province. No part of the empire had so long escaped; no part was so fearfully visited, as Africa by the invasion of the Vandals. The once prosperous and fruitful region presented to the view only ruined cities, burning villages, a population thinned by the sword, bowed to slavery, and exposed to every kind of torture and mutilation. With these fierce barbarians, the awful presence of Christianity imposed no respect. The churches were not exempt from the general ruin, nor the bishops and clergy from cruelty and death, nor the dedicated virgins from worse than death. In many places the services of religion entirely ceased from the extermination of the worshippers or the flight of the priests. To Augustine, as the supreme authority in matters of faith or conduct, was submitted the grave question of the course to be pursued by the clergy,—whether they were to seek their own security, or to confront the sword of the ravager. The advice of Augustine was at once lofty and discreet. Where the flock remained, it was cowardice, it was impiety, in the clergy to desert them, and to deprive them in those disastrous times of the consolatory

offices of religion, their children of baptism, themselves of the holy Eucharist. But where the priest was an especial object of persecution, and his place might be supplied by another; where the flock was massacred or dispersed, or had abandoned their homes,—the clergy might follow them, and, if possible, provide for their own security.

Augustine did not fall below his own high notions of Christian, of episcopal duty. When the Vandal army gathered around Hippo, one of the few cities which still afforded a refuge for the persecuted provincials, he refused, though more than seventy years old, to abandon his post. In the third month
A.D. 430. of the siege, he was released by death, and escaped the horrors of the capture, the cruelties of the conqueror, and the desolation of his church.¹

¹ In the life of Augustine, I have chiefly consulted that prefixed to his works, and Tillemont, with the passages in his Confessions and Epistles.

CHAPTER XI.

Jerome. The Monastic System.

THOUGH not so directly or magisterially dominant over the Christianity of the West, the influence of Jerome has been of scarcely less importance than that of Augustine. Jerome was the connecting link between the East and the West; through him, as it were, passed over into the Latin hemisphere of Christendom that which was still necessary for its permanence and independence during the succeeding ages. The time of separation approached, when the Eastern and Western empires, the Latin and the Greek languages, were to divide the world. Western Christianity was to form an entirely separate system. The different nations and kingdoms which were to arise out of the wreck of the Roman empire were to maintain, each its national church, but there was to be a permanent centre of unity in that of Rome, considered as the common parent and federal head of Western Christendom. But, before this vast and silent revolution took place, certain preparatives, in which Jerome was chiefly instrumental, gave strength and harmony and vitality to the religion of the West, from which the precious inheritance has been secured to modern Europe.

The two leading transactions in which Jerome took the effective part, were, — 1st, the introduction, or at least the general reception, of Monachism in the West ;

2d, the establishment of an authoritative and universally recognized version of the sacred writings into the Latin language. For both these important services Jerome qualified himself by his visits to the East. He was probably the first Occidental (though born in Dalmatia, he may be almost considered a Roman, having passed all his youth in that city) who became completely naturalized and domiciliated in Judæa: and his example, though it did not originate, strengthened to an extraordinary degree the passion for pilgrimages to the Holy Land; a sentiment in later times productive of such vast and unexpected results. In the earlier period, the repeated devastations of that devoted country, and still more its occupation by the Jews, had overpowered the natural veneration of the Christians for the scene of the life and sufferings of the Redeemer. It was an accursed rather than a holy region, desecrated by the presence of the murderers of the Lord, rather than endeared by the reminiscences of his personal ministry and expiatory death. The total ruin of the Jews, and their expulsion from Jerusalem by Hadrian; their dispersion into other lands, with the simultaneous progress of Christianity in Palestine; and their settlement in Ælia, the Roman Jerusalem, notwithstanding the profanation of that city by idolatrous emblems, — allowed those more gentle and sacred feelings to grow up in strength and silence.¹ Already, before the time

¹ Augustine asserts that the *whole world* flocked to Bethlehem to see the place of Christ's nativity. — t. i. p. 561. Pilgrimages, according to him, were undertaken to Arabia, to see the dunghheap on which Job sat. — t. ii. p. 59. For 180 years, according to Jerome, from Hadrian to Constantine, the statue of Jupiter occupied the place of the resurrection, and a statue of Venus was worshipped on the *rock* of Calvary. But, as the object of Hadrian was to insult the Jewish, not the Christian, religion, it seems not very credible that these two sites should be chosen for the Heathen temples. — Hieronym. Oper. Epist. xlix. p. 505.

of Jerome, pilgrims had flowed from all quarters of the world; and during his life, whoever had attained to any proficiency in religion, in Gaul, or in the secluded island of Britain, was eager to obtain a personal knowledge of these hallowed places. They were met by strangers from Armenia, Persia, India (the Southern Arabia), Æthiopia, the countless monks of Egypt, and from the whole of Western Asia.¹ Yet Jerome was, no doubt, the most influential pilgrim to the Holy Land; the increasing and general desire to visit the soil printed, as it were, with the footsteps, and moist with the redeeming blood, of the Saviour, may be traced to his writings, which opened as it were a constant and easy communication, and established an intercourse, more or less regularly maintained, between Western Europe and Palestine.²

¹ "Quicumque in Galliâ fuerat primus huc properat. Divisus ab orbe nostro Britannus, si in religione processerit, occiduo sole dimisso, quærit locum famâ sibi tantum, et Scripturarum relatione cognitum. Quid referamus Armenios, quid Persas, quid Indiæ, quid Æthiopiæ populos, ipsamque juxta Ægyptum, fertilem monachorum, Pontum et Cappadociam, Syriam, Cretam, et Mesopotamiam cunctaque orientis examina." This is the letter of a Roman female, Paula. — Hieronym. Oper. Epist. xlv. p. 551.

² See the glowing description of all the religious wonders in the Holy Land in the Epitaphium Paulæ. An epistle, however, of Gregory of Nyssa strongly remonstrates against pilgrimages to the Holy Land, even from Cappadocia. He urges the dangers and suspicions to which pious recluses, especially women, would be subject with male attendants, either strangers or friends, on a lonely road; the dissolute words and sights which may be unavoidable in the inns; the dangers of robbery and violence in the Holy Land itself, of the moral state of which he draws a fearful picture. He asserts the religious superiority of Cappadocia, which had more churches than any part of the world; and inquires, in plain terms, whether a man will believe the virgin birth of Christ the more by seeing Bethlehem, or his resurrection by visiting his tomb, or his ascension by standing on the Mount of Olives. — Greg. Nyss. de eunt. Hieros.

The authenticity of this epistle is, indeed, contested by Roman Catholic writers; but I can see no internal evidence against its genuineness. Jerome's more sober letter to Paulinus, Epist. xxix. vol. iv. p. 563, should also be compared.

But besides this subordinate, if indeed subordinate, effect of Jerome's peculiar position between the East and West, he was thence both incited and enabled to accomplish his more immediately influential undertakings. In Palestine and in Egypt, Jerome became himself deeply imbued with the spirit of Monachism, and labored with all his zeal to awaken the more tardy West to rival Egypt and Syria in displaying this sublime perfection of Christianity. By his letters, descriptive of the purity, the sanctity, the total estrangement from the deceitful world in these blessed retirements, he kindled the holy emulation, especially of the females, in Rome. Matrons and virgins of patrician families embraced with contagious fervor the monastic life; and though the populous districts in the neighborhood of the metropolis were not equally favorable for retreat, yet they attempted to practise the rigid observances of the desert in the midst of the busy metropolis.

For the second of his great achievements, the version of the sacred Scriptures, Jerome derived inestimable advantages, and acquired unprecedented authority, by his intercourse with the East. His residence in Palestine familiarized him with the language and peculiar habits of the sacred writers. He was the first Christian writer of note who thought it worth while to study Hebrew. Nor was it the language alone; the customs, the topography, the traditions, of Palestine were carefully collected, and applied by Jerome, if not always with the soundest judgment, yet occasionally with great felicity and success to the illustration of the sacred writings.

The influence of Monachism upon the manners, opinions, and general character of Christianity, as well

as that of the Vulgate translation of the Bible, not only on the religion, but on the literature, of Europe, appear to demand a more extensive investigation; and as Jerome, if not the representative, was the great propagator, of Monachism in the West, and as about this time this form of Christianity overshadowed and dominated throughout the whole of Christendom, it will be a fit occasion, although I have in former parts of this work not been able altogether to avoid it, to develop more fully its origin and principles.

Monachism.

It is singular to see this Oriental influence successively enslaving two religions in their origin and in their genius so totally opposite to Monachism as Christianity and the religion of Mohammed. Both gradually and unreluctantly yield to the slow and inevitable change. Christianity, with very slight authority from the precepts, and none from the practice of the Author and first teachers of the faith, admitted this without inquiry as the perfection and consummation of its own theory. Its advocates and their willing auditors equally forgot, that, if Christ and his apostles had retired into the desert, Christianity would never have spread beyond the wilderness of Judæa. The transformation which afterwards took place of the fierce Arab marauder, or the proselyte to the martial creed of the Koran, into a dreamy dervish, was hardly more violent and complete, than that of the disciple of the great example of Christian virtue, or of the active and popular Paul, into a solitary anchorite.

Still that which might appear most adverse to the universal dissemination of Christianity eventually tended to its entire and permanent incorporation with the whole of society. When Erem

Cœnobitism.

itism gave place to Cœnobitism; when the hermitage grew up into a convent, the establishment of these religious fraternities in the wildest solitudes gathered round them a Christian community, or spread, as it were, a gradually increasing belt of Christian worship, which was maintained by the spiritual services of the monks. The monks, though not generally ordained as ecclesiastics, furnished a constant supply for ordination. In this manner, the rural districts, which, in most parts, long after Christianity had gained the predominance in the towns, remained attached by undisturbed habit to the ancient superstition, were slowly brought within the pale of the religion. The monastic communities commenced, in the more remote and less populous districts of the Roman world, that ameliorating change which, at later times, they carried on beyond the frontiers. As afterwards they introduced civilization and Christianity among the barbarous tribes of North Germany or Poland, so now they continued in all parts a quiet but successful aggression on the lurking Paganism.

Monachism was the natural result of the incorporation of Christianity with the prevalent opinions of mankind, and in part of the state of profound excitement into which it had thrown the human mind. We have traced the universal predominance of the great principle, the inherent evil of matter. This primary tenet, as well of the Eastern religions as of the Platonism of the West, coincided with the somewhat ambiguous use of the term "world" in the sacred writings. Both were alike the irreclaimable domain of the Adversary of good. The importance assumed by the soul, now through Christianity become profoundly conscious of its immortality, tended to the

Origin of
Monachism.

same end. The deep and serious solicitude for the fate of that everlasting part of our being, the concentration of all its energies on its own individual welfare, withdrew it entirely within itself. A kind of sublime selfishness excluded all subordinate considerations.¹ The only security against the corruption which environed it on all sides seemed entire alienation from the contagion of matter; the constant mortification, the extinction, if possible, of those senses which were necessarily keeping up a dangerous and treasonable correspondence with the external universe. On the other hand, entire estrangement from the rest of mankind, included in the proscribed and infectious *world*, appeared no less indispensable. Communion with God alone was at once the sole refuge and perfection of the abstracted spirit; prayer, the sole unendangered occupation, alternating only with that coarse industry which might give employment to the refractory members, and provide that scanty sustenance required by the inalienable infirmity of corporeal existence. The fears and the hopes were equally wrought upon, — the fear of defilement and consequently of eternal perdition; the hope of attaining the serene enjoyment of the divine presence in the life to come. If any thought of love to mankind, as an unquestionable duty entailed by Christian brotherhood, intruded on the isolated being, thus laboring on the single object, his own spiritual perfection, it found a vent in prayer for their happiness,

¹ It is remarkable how rarely, if ever (I cannot call to mind an instance), in the discussions on the comparative merits of marriage and celibacy, the social advantages appear to have occurred to the mind; the benefit to mankind of raising up a race born from Christian parents and brought up in Christian principles. It is always argued with relation to the interests and the perfection of the individual soul; and, even with regard to that, the writers seem almost unconscious of the softening and humanizing effect of the natural affections, the beauty of parental tenderness and filial love

which excused all more active or effective benevolence.

On both principles, of course, marriage was inexorably condemned.¹ Some expressions in the Celibacy. writings of St. Paul,² and emulation of the Gnostic sects, combining with these general sentiments, had very early raised celibacy into the highest of Christian virtues: marriage was a necessary evil, an inevitable infirmity of the weaker brethren. With the more rational and earlier writers, Cyprian, Athanasius, and even in occasional passages in Ambrose or Augustine, it had its own high and peculiar excellence; but even with them, virginity, the absolute estrangement from all sensual indulgence, was the transcendent virtue, the pre-assumption of the angelic state, the approximation to the beatified existence.³

¹ There is a sensible and judicious book, entitled "*Die Einführung der erzwungenen Ehelosigkeit bei den Christlichen Geistlichen und ihre Folge,*" von J. A. und Aug. Theiner, Altenburg, 1828, which enters fully into the origin and consequences of celibacy in the whole Church. This is an early work of Theiner, now become a Roman Catholic, and laboring in the library of the Vatican as the Continuator of Baronius.

² I agree with Theiner (p. 24) in considering these precepts local and temporary, relating to the especial circumstances of those whom St. Paul addressed.

³ The general tone was that of the vehement Jerome. There must not only be vessels of gold and silver, but of wood and earthenware. This contemptuous admission of the necessity of the married life distinguished the orthodox from the Manichean, the Montanist, and the Encratite. — Jerom. adv. Jovin. p. 146.

The sentiments of the Fathers on marriage and virginity may be thus briefly stated. I am not speaking with reference to the marriage of the clergy, which will be considered hereafter.

The earlier writers, when they are contending with the Gnostics, though they elevate virginity above marriage, speak very strongly on the folly, and even the impiety, of prohibiting or disparaging lawful wedlock. They acknowledge and urge the admitted fact that several of the apostles were married. This is the tone of Ignatius (Cotel. Pat. Apost. ii. 77); of Tertullian ("licebat et apostolis nubere et uxores circumducere." — *De Exhort. Castit.*); above all, of Clement of Alexandria.

In the time of Cyprian, vows of virginity were not irrevocable. 'S'

Every thing conspired to promote, nothing remained to counteract, this powerful impulse. In the East, this seclusion from the world was by no means uncommon. Even among the busy and restless Greeks, some of the philosophers had asserted the privilege of wisdom to stand aloof from the rest of mankind; the question of the superior excellence of the active or the contemplative life had been agitated on equal terms. But in some regions of the East, the sultry and oppressive heats, the general relaxation of the physical system, dispose constitutions of a certain temperament to a dreamy inertness. The indolence and prostration of the body produce a kind of activity in the mind, if that may properly be called activity which is merely giving loose to the imagination and the emotions, as they follow out a wild train of incoherent thought, or are agitated by impulses of spontaneous and ungoverned feeling. Ascetic Chris-

Causes which
tended to
promote
Monachism

autem perseverare nolunt, vel non possunt, melius est ut nubant, quam in ignem delictis suis cadant."—Epist. 62. And his general language, more particularly his tract *De Habitu Virginum*, implies that strong discipline was necessary to restrain the dedicated virgins from the vanities of the world.

But, in the fourth century, the eloquent Fathers vie with each other in exalting the transcendent, holy, angelic virtue of virginity. Every one of the more distinguished writers—Basil, the two Gregories, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom—has a treatise or treatises upon virginity, on which he expands with all the glowing language which he can command. It became a common doctrine that sexual intercourse was the sign and the consequence of the Fall; they forgot that the command to "increase and multiply" is placed in the Book of Genesis (i. 28) before the Fall.

We have before quoted passages from Gregory of Nazianzum. Gregory of Nyssa says: ἡδονὴ δὲ αὐτῆς ἐγγνώμενη τῆς ἐκπτώσεως ἤρξατο—ἐν ἀνομίαις ἐστὶν ἢ σύλληψις, ἐν ἀμαρτίαις ἢ κήσις.—Greg. Nyss. de Virgin. c. 12, c. 13. But Jerome is the most vehement of all: "Nuptiæ terram replent, virginitas Paradisum." The unclean beasts went *by pairs* into the ark; the clean, by seven. Though there is another mystery in the pairs, even the *unclean beasts* were not to be allowed a second marriage: "Ne in bestiis quidem et immundis avibus digamia comprobata sit."—Ad. Jovin. vol. iv. p. 160. "Laudo nuptias, laudo conjugium, sed quia mihi virgines generat."—Ad Eustoch. p. 36.

tianity ministered new aliment to this common propensity; it gave an object both vague and determinate enough to stimulate, yet never to satisfy or exhaust. The regularity of stated hours of prayer, and of a kind of idle industry, weaving mats, or plaiting baskets, alternated with periods of morbid reflection on the moral state of the soul, and of mystic communion with the Deity.¹ It cannot, indeed, be wondered that the new revelation, as it were, of the Deity, this profound and rational certainty of his existence, this infelt consciousness of his perpetual presence, these yet unknown impressions of his infinity, his power, and his love, should give a higher character to this eremitical enthusiasm, and attract men of loftier and more vigorous minds within its sphere. It was not merely the pusillanimous dread of encountering the trials of life which urged the humbler spirits to seek the safe retirement, or the natural love of peace and the weariness and satiety of life, which commended this seclusion to those who were too gentle to mingle in, or who were exhausted with, the unprofitable turmoil of the world. Nor was it always the anxiety to mortify the rebellious and refractory body with more advantage. The one absorbing idea of the majesty of the Godhead almost seemed to swallow up all other considerations; the transcendent nature of the Triune Deity, the relation of the different persons in the Godhead to each other, seemed the only worthy objects of man's contemplative faculties. If the soul never aspired to that Pantheis-

¹ "Nam pariter exercentes corporis animæque virtutes, exterioris hominis stipendia cum emolumentis interioris exæquant, lubricis motibus cordis, et fluctuationi cogitationum instabili, operum pondera, velut quandam tenacem atque immobilem anchoram præfigentes, cui volubilitas ac pervagatio cordis innexa intra cellæ claustra, velut in porta fidissimam valeat contineri." - *Cassian.*, Instit. ii. 13.

tic union with the spiritual essence of being which is the supreme ambition of the higher Indian mysticism, their theory seemed to promise a sublime estrangement from all sublunary things, an occupation for the spirit, already, as it were, disembodied and immaterialized by its complete concentration on the Deity.

In Syria and in Egypt, as well as in the remoter East, the example had already been set, both of solitary retirement and of religious communities. The Jews had both their hermitages and their cœnobitic institutions. Anchorites swarmed in the deserts near the Dead Sea;¹ and the Essenes, in the same district, and the Egyptian Therapeutæ, were strictly analogous to the Christian monastic establishments. In the neighborhood of many of the Eastern cities were dreary and dismal wastes, incapable of, or unimproved by, cultivation, which seemed to allure the enthusiast to abandon the haunts of men and the vices of society. Egypt especially, where every thing excessive and extravagant found its birth or ripened with unexampled vigor, seemed formed for the encouragement of the wildest anchoritism. It is a long narrow valley, closed in on each side by craggy or by sandy deserts. The rocks were pierced either with natural caverns, or hollowed out by the hand of man into long subterranean cells and galleries for various uses, either of life or of superstition, or of sepulture. The Christian, sometimes driven out by persecution (for persecution no doubt greatly contributed to people these solitudes),² or prompted by religious feelings to fly from the face of man, found himself, with no violent effort, in a dead

¹ *Josephi Vita.*

² Paul, the first Christian hermit, fled from persecution. — *Hironym., Vit. Pauli* p. 69.

and voiceless wilderness, under a climate which required no other shelter than the ceiling of the rock-hewn cave, and where actual sustenance might be obtained with little difficulty.

St. Antony is sometimes described as the founder of the monastic life; it is clear, however, that Antony. he only imitated and excelled the example of less famous anchorites. But he may fairly be considered as its representative.

Antony¹ was born of Christian parents, bred up in the faith, and, before he was twenty years old, found himself master of considerable wealth, and charged with the care of a younger sister. He was a youth of ardent imagination, vehement impulses, and so imperfectly educated as to be acquainted with no language but his native Egyptian.² A constant attendant on Christian worship, he had long looked back with admiration on those primitive times when the Christians laid all their worldly goods at the feet of the apostles. One day he heard the sentence, "Go, sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, . . . and come, and follow me." It seemed personally addressed to himself by the voice of God. He returned home, distributed his lands among his neighbors, sold his furniture and other effects, except a small sum reserved for his sister, whom he placed under the care of some pious Christian virgins. Another text, "Take no thought for the morrow," transpierced his heart, and sent him forth

¹ The fact that the great Athanasius paused in his polemic warfare to write the life of Antony, may show the general admiration towards the monastic life.

² Jerome claims the honor of being the first hermit for Paul, in the time of Decius or Valerian (Vit. Paul. p. 68); but the whole life of Paul, and the visit of Antony to him, read like religious romance, and, it appears from the preface of Jerome to the Life of Hilarion, did not find implicit credit in his own day.

for ever from the society of men. He found an aged solitary, who dwelt without the city. He was seized with pious emulation, and from that time devoted himself to the severest asceticism. There was still, however, something gentle and humane about the asceticism of Antony. His retreat (if we may trust the romantic Life of St. Hilarion, in the works of St. Jerome) was by no means of the horrid and savage character affected by some other recluses: it was at the foot of a high and rocky mountain, from which welled forth a stream of limpid water, bordered by palms, which afforded an agreeable shade. Antony had planted this pleasant spot with vines and shrubs; there was an enclosure for fruit trees and vegetables, and a tank from which the labor of Antony irrigated his garden. His conduct and character seemed to partake of this less stern and gloomy tendency.¹ He visited the most distinguished anchorites, but only to observe, that he might imitate, the peculiar virtue of each, — the gentle disposition of one; the constancy of prayer in another; the kindness, the patience, the industry, the vigils, the macerations, the love of study, the passionate contemplation of the Deity, the charity towards mankind. It was his devout ambition to equal or transcend each in his particular austerity or distinctive excellence.

But man does not violate nature with impunity: the solitary state had its passions, its infirmities, its perils. The hermit could fly from his fellow-men, but not from himself. The vehement and fervid temperament which drove him into the desert was not subdued; it found new ways of giving loose to its suppressed impulses. The self-centred imagination began to people the desert with worse

Demonology.

¹ Vita St. Hilarion, p. 85.

enemies than mankind. Demonology, in all its multiplied forms, was now an established part of the Christian creed, and embraced with the greatest ardor by men in such a state of religious excitement as to turn hermits. The trials, the temptations, the agonies, were felt and described as personal conflicts with hosts of impure, malignant, furious fiends. In the desert, these beings took visible form and substance; in the day-dreams of profound religious meditation, in the visions of the agitated and exhausted spirit, they were undiscernible from reality.¹ It is impossible, in the wild legends which became an essential part of Christian literature, to decide how much is the disordered imagination of the saint, the self-deception of the credulous, or the fiction of the zealous writer. The very effort to suppress certain feelings has a natural tendency to awaken and strengthen them. The horror of carnal indulgence would not permit the sensual desires to die away into apathy. Men are apt to find what they seek in their own hearts, and by anxiously searching for the guilt of lurking lust, or desire of worldly wealth or enjoyment, the conscience, as it were, struck forcibly upon the chord which it wished to deaden, and made it vibrate with a kind of morbid, but more than ordinary, energy. Nothing was so licentious or so terrible as not to find its way to the cell of the recluse. Beautiful women danced around him; wild beasts of every shape, and monsters with no shape at all, howled and yelled and shrieked about him, while he knelt in prayer, or snatched his broken slumbers. "Oh, how often in the desert," says Jerome, "in that vast solitude; which, parched by the sultry sun, affords a dwelling to the

¹ Compare Jerome's *Life of St. Hilarion*, p. 76.

monks, did I fancy myself in the midst of the luxuries of Rome! I sat alone; for I was full of bitterness. My misshapen limbs were rough with sackcloth; and my skin was so squalid that I might have been taken for a negro. Tears and groans were my occupation every day, and all day; if sleep surprised me unawares, my naked bones, which scarcely held together, clashed on the earth. I will say nothing of my food or beverage; even the rich have nothing but cold water; any warm drink is a luxury. Yet even I, who for the fear of hell had condemned myself to this dungeon, the companion only of scorpions and wild beasts, was in the midst of girls dancing. My face was pale with fasting, but the mind in my cold body burned with desires; the fires of lust boiled up in the body, which was already dead. Destitute of all succor, I cast myself at the feet of Jesus, washed them with my tears, dried them with my hair, and subdued the rebellious flesh by a whole week's fasting." After describing the wild scenes into which he fled, the deep glens and shaggy precipices, "The Lord is my witness," he concludes; "sometimes I appeared to be present among the angelic hosts, and sang, 'We will haste after thee for the sweet savor of thy ointments.'"¹ For at times, on the other hand, gentle and more than human voices were heard consoling the constant and devout recluse; and sometimes the baffled demon would humbly acknowledge himself to be rebuked before the hermit. But this was in general after a fearful struggle. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies. The severest pain could alone subdue or dis-

Self-torture.

tract the refractory desires or the pre-occupied mind.

¹ Song of Solomon. Hieronym., Epist. xxii.

Human invention was exhausted in self-inflicted torments. The Indian faquir was rivalled in the variety of distorted postures and of agonizing exercises. Some lived in clefts and caves; some in huts, into which the light of day could not penetrate; some hung huge weights to their arms, necks, or loins; some confined themselves in cages; some on the tops of mountains, exposed to the sun and weather. The most celebrated hermit at length for life condemned himself to stand in a fiery climate, on the narrow top of a pillar.¹ Nor were these always rude or uneducated fanatics. St. Arsenius had filled, and with universal respect, the dignified post of tutor to the emperor Arcadius. But Arsenius became an hermit; and, among other things, it is related of him, that, employing himself in the common occupation of the Egyptian monks, weaving baskets of palm-leaves, he changed only once a year the water in which the leaves were moistened. The smell of the fetid water was a just penalty for the perfumes which he had inhaled during his worldly life. Even sleep was a sin; an hour's unbroken slumber was sufficient for a monk. On Saturday evening, Arsenius lay down with his back to the setting sun, and continued awake, in fervent prayer, till the rising sun shone on his

¹ The language of Evagrius (H. E. i. 13) about Simeon vividly expresses the effect which he made on his own age. "Rivalling, while yet in the flesh, the conversation of angels, he withdrew himself from all earthly things, and, doing violence to nature, which always has a downward tendency, he aspired after that which is on high; and, standing midway between earth and heaven, he had communion with God, and glorified God with the angels; from the earth offering supplications (*πρεσβείας προύγων*) as an ambassador to God; bringing down from heaven to men the divine blessing." The influence of the most holy martyr in the air (*παραγίων και ἁγίων μάρτυρος*) on political affairs lies beyond the range of the present history.

eyes;¹ so far had Christianity departed from its humane and benevolent and social simplicity.

It may be a curious question how far enthusiasm repays its votaries, as far as the individual is concerned; in what degree these self-inflicted tortures added to or diminished the real happiness of man; how far these privations and bodily sufferings, which to the cool and unexcited reason appear intolerable, either themselves produced a callous insensibility, or were met by apathy arising out of the strong counter-excitement of the mind; to what extent, if still felt in unmitigated anguish, they were compensated by inward complacency from the conscious fulfilment of religious duty, the stern satisfaction of the will at its triumph over nature, the elevation of mind from the consciousness of the great object in view, or the ecstatic pre-enjoyment of certain reward. In some instances, they might derive some recompense from the respect, veneration, almost adoration, of men. Emperors visited the cells of these ignorant, perhaps superstitious, fanatics, revered them as oracles, and conducted the affairs of empire by their advice. The great Theodosius is said to have consulted John the Solitary on the issue of the war with Eugenius.² His feeble successors followed faithfully the example of his superstition.

Antony appeared at the juncture most favorable for the acceptance of his monastic tenets.³ His fame and his example tended still further to disseminate the spreading contagion. In every part, the desert began to swarm with anchorites, who

Influence of
Antony.

¹ Compare Fleury, xx. 1, 2.

² Evagr., Vit. St. Paul, c. 1; Theodoret, v. 24. See Flechier, *Vie de Theodose*, iv. 43.

³ "Hujus vitæ auctor Paulus, illustrator Antonius." — Jerom. v. 46.

found it difficult to remain alone. Some sought out the most retired chambers of the ancient cemeteries ; some those narrow spots which remained above water during the inundations, and saw with pleasure the tide arise which was to render them unapproachable to their fellow-creatures. But in all parts the determined solitary found himself constantly obliged to recede farther and farther ; he could scarcely find a retreat so dismal, a cavern so profound, a rock so inaccessible, but that he would be pressed upon by some zealous competitor, or invaded by the humble veneration of some disciple.

It is extraordinary to observe this infringement on the social system of Christianity, this disconnecting principle, which, pushed to excess, might appear fatal to that organization in which so much of the strength of Christianity consisted, gradually self-expanding into a new source of power and energy, so wonderfully adapted to the age. The desire of the anchorite to isolate himself in unendangered seclusion was constantly balanced and corrected by the holy zeal or involuntary tendency to proselytism. The farther the saint retired from the habitations of men, the brighter and more attractive became the light of his sanctity ; the more he concealed himself, the more was he sought out by a multitude of admiring and emulous followers. Each built or occupied his cell in the hallowed neighborhood. A monastery was thus imperceptibly formed around the hermitage ; and nothing was requisite to the incorporation of a regular community, but the formation of rules for common intercourse, stated meetings for worship, and something of uniformity in dress, food, and daily occupations. Some monastic establishments were no doubt formed at once, in

imitation of the Jewish Therapeutæ; but many of the more celebrated Egyptian establishments gathered, as it were, around the central cell of an Antony or a Pachomius.¹

Something like an uniformity of usage appears to have prevailed in the Egyptian monasteries. Cœnobitic establishments. The brothers were dressed, after the fashion of the country, in long linen tunics, with a woollen girdle, a cloak, and over it a sheep-skin. They usually went barefooted, but at certain very cold or very parching seasons, they wore a kind of sandal. They did not wear the hair-cloth.² Their food was bread and water; their luxuries, occasionally a little oil or salt, a few olives, peas, or a single fig: they ate in perfect silence, each decury by itself. They were bound to strict obedience to their superiors; they were divided into decuries and centenaries, over whom the decurions and centurions presided: each had his separate cell.³ The furniture of their cells was a mat of palm-leaves and a bundle of the papyrus, which served for a pillow by night and a seat by day. Every evening and every night they were summoned to prayer by the sound of a horn. At each meeting were sung twelve psalms, pointed out, it was believed, by an angel. On certain occasions, lessons were read

¹ Pachomius was, strictly speaking, the founder of the cœnobitic establishments in Egypt; Eustathius, in Armenia; Basil, in Asia. Pachomius had fourteen hundred monks in his establishment: seven thousand acknowledged his jurisdiction.

² Jerome speaks of the cilicium as common among the Syrian monks, with whom he lived. Epist. i.: "Horrent sacco membra deformi." Even women assumed it. — Epitaph. Paulæ, p. 678. Cassian is inclined to think it often a sign of pride. — Instit. i. 3.

³ The accounts of Jerome (in Eustochium, p. 45) and of Cassian are blended. There is some difference as to the hours of meeting for prayers; but probably the cœnobitic institutes differed as to that and on some points of diet.

from the Old or New Testament. The assembly preserved total silence; nothing was heard but the voice of the chanter or reader. No one dared even to look at another. The tears of the audience alone, or, if he spoke of the joys of eternal beatitude, a gentle murmur of hope, was the only sound which broke the stillness of the auditory. At the close of each psalm, the whole assembly prostrated itself in mute adoration.¹ In every part of Egypt, from the Cataracts to the Delta, the whole land was bordered by these communities; there were 5,000 cœnobites in the desert of Nitria alone;² the total number of male anchorites and monks was estimated at 76,000; the females at 27,700. Parts of Syria were, perhaps, scarcely less densely peopled with ascetics. Cappadocia and the provinces bordering on Persia boasted of numerous communities, as well as Asia Minor and the eastern parts of Europe. Though the monastic spirit was in its full power, the establishment of regular communities in Italy must be reserved for Benedict of Nursia, and lies beyond the bounds of our present history. The enthusiasm pervaded all orders. Men of rank, of family, of wealth, of education, suddenly changed the luxurious palace for the howling wilderness, the flatteries of men for the total silence of the desert. They voluntarily abandoned their estates, their connections,

¹ "Tantum a cunctis præbetur silentium, ut cum in unum tam numerosa fratrum multitudo conveniat, præter illum, qui consurgens psalmum decantat in medio, nullus hominum penitus adesse credatur." No one was heard to spit, to sneeze, to cough, or to yawn,—there was not even a sigh or a groan; "nisi fortè hæc quæ per excessum mentis claustra oris effugerit, quæque insensibiliter cordi obrepserit, immoderato scilicet atque intolerabili spiritûs fervore succenso, dum ea quæ ignita mens in semetipsâ non prævalet continere, per ineffabilem quendam gemitum pectoris sui conclavibus evaporare conatur."—Cassian., *Instit.* ii. 10.

² Jerom. ad Eustoch. p. 44.

their worldly prospects. The desire of fame, of power, of influence, which might now swell the ranks of the ecclesiastics, had no concern in their sacrifice. Multitudes must have perished without the least knowledge of their virtues or their fate transpiring in the world. Few could obtain, or hope to obtain, the honor of canonization, or that celebrity which Jerome promises to his friend Blesilla, to live not merely in heaven, but in the memory of man; to be consecrated to immortality by his writings.¹

But the cœnobitic establishments had their dangers no less than the cell of the solitary hermit. Besides those consequences of seclusion from the world, the natural results of confinement in this close separation from mankind, and this austere discharge of stated duties, were too often found to be the proscription of human knowledge and the extinction of human sympathies. Christian wisdom and Christian humanity could find no place in their unsocial system. A morose and sullen and contemptuous ignorance could not but grow up where there was no communication with the rest of mankind, and the human understanding was rigidly confined to certain topics. The want of objects of natural affection could not but harden the heart; and those who, in their stern religious austerity, are merciless to themselves, are apt to be merciless to others:² their callous and insensible hearts have no sense

Dangers of
cœnobitism.

Bigotry.

¹ "Quæ cum Christo vivit in cœlis, in hominum quoque ore victura est. . . Nunquam in meis moritura est libris." — Epist. xxiii. p. 60.

² There is a cruel history of an abbot, Mucius, in Cassian. Mucius entertained admission into a monastery. He had one little boy with him of eight years old. They were placed in separate cells, lest the father's heart should be softened and indisposed to total renunciation of all earthly joys by the sight of his child. That he might still farther prove his Christian obedience! and self-denial, the child was systematically neglected, dressed in

of the exquisitely delicate and poignant feelings which arise out of the domestic affections. Bigotry has always found its readiest and sternest executioners among those who have never known the charities of life.

These fatal effects seem inherent consequences of Monasticism; its votaries could not but degenerate from their lofty and sanctifying purposes. That which in one generation was sublime enthusiasm, in the next became sullen bigotry, or sometimes wrought the same individual into a stern forgetfulness, not only of the vices and follies, but of all the more generous and sacred feelings, of humanity. In the cœno-

Fanaticism.

bitic institutes was added a strong corporate spirit, and a blind attachment to their own opinions, which were identified with religion and the glory of God. The monks of Nitria, from simple and harmless enthusiasts, became ferocious bands of partisans; instead of remaining aloof in jealous seclusion from the factions of the rest of the world, they rushed down armed into Alexandria: what they considered a sacred cause inflamed and warranted a ferocity not surpassed by the turbulent and blood-thirsty rabble of that city. In support of a favorite doctrine or in defence of a popular prelate, they did not consider that they were violating their own first principles in yielding to all

rags, and so dirty, as to be disgusting to the father; he was frequently beaten, to try whether it would force tears down the parent's squalid cheeks. "*Nevertheless, for the love of Christ!!!* and from the *virtue* of obedience, the heart of the father remained hard and unmoved;" he thought little of his child's tears, only of his own humility and perfection. He at length was urged to show the last mark of his submission by throwing the child into the river. As if this was a *commandment of God*, he seized the child, and "the work of faith and obedience" would have been accomplished, if the brethren had not interposed, "and, as it were, rescued the child from the waters." And Cassian relates this as an act of the highest religious heroism!—*Liv. iv. 27.*

the savage passions, and mingling in the bloody strife, of that world which they had abandoned.

Total seclusion from mankind is as dangerous to enlightened religion as to Christian charity. We might have expected to find among those who separated themselves from the world, to contemplate, undisturbed, the nature and perfections of ^{Ignorance} the Deity, in general, the purest and most spiritual notions of the Godhead. Those whose primary principle was dread of the corruption of matter would be the last coarsely to materialize their divinity. But those who could elevate their thoughts, or could maintain them at this height, were but a small part of the vast numbers, whom the many-mingled motives of zeal, superstition, piety, pride, emulation, or distaste for the world, led into the desert. They required something more gross and palpable than the fine and subtle conception of a spiritual being. Superstition, not content with crowding the brain with imaginary figments, spread its darkening mists over the Deity himself.

It was among the monks of Egypt that anthropomorphism assumed its most vulgar and obstinate form. They would not be persuaded that the expressions in the sacred writings which ascribe human acts, and faculties, and passions to the Deity were to be understood as a condescension to the weakness of our nature; they seemed disposed to compensate to themselves for the loss of human society by degrading the Deity, whom they professed to be their sole companion, to the likeness of man. Imagination could not maintain its flight, and they could not summon reason, which they surrendered with the rest of their dangerous freedom, to supply its place; and generally supersti-

tion demanded and received the same implicit and resolute obedience as religion itself. Once having humanized the Deity, they could not be weaned from the object of their worship. The great cause of quarrel between Theophilus, the Archbishop of Alexandria, and the monks of the adjacent establishments, was his vain attempt to enlighten them on those points to which they obstinately adhered, as the vital and essential part of their faith.

Pride, moreover, is almost the necessary result of such distinctions as the monks drew between themselves and the rest of mankind; and prejudice and obstinacy are the natural fruits of pride. Once having embraced opinions, however, as in this instance, contrary to their primary principles, small communities are with the utmost difficulty induced to surrender those tenets in which they support and strengthen each other by the general concurrence. The anthropomorphism of the Egyptian monks resisted alike argument and authority. The bitter and desperate remonstrance of the aged Serapion, when he was forced to surrender his anthropomorphic notions of the Deity, — “You have deprived me of my God,”¹ — shows not merely the degraded intellectual state of the monks of Egypt, but the incapacity of the mass of mankind to keep up such high-wrought and imaginative conceptions. Enthusiasm of any particular kind wastes itself as soon as its votaries become numerous. It may hand down its lamp from individual to individual for many generations: but, when it would include a whole section of society, it substitutes some new incentive, strong party or corporate feeling, habit, advantage, or the pride of exclusiveness,

¹ Cassian, Collat. x. 1.

for its original disinterested zeal; and can never for a long period adhere to its original principles.

The effect of Monachism on Christianity, and on society at large, was of a very mingled character. Its actual influence on the population of the empire was probably not considerable, and would scarcely counterbalance the increase arising out of the superior morality, as regards sexual intercourse, introduced by the Christian religion.¹ Some apprehensions, indeed, were betrayed on this point; and when the opponents of Monachism urged, that, if such principles were universally admitted, the human race would come to an end, its resolute advocates replied, that the Almighty, if necessary, would appoint new means for the propagation of mankind.

General effects of Monachism on Christianity.

The withdrawal of so much ardor, talent, and virtue into seclusion, which, however elevating to the individual, became altogether unprofitable to society, might be considered a more serious objection. The barren world could ill spare any active or inventive mind. Public affairs, at this disastrous period, demanded the best energies which

On political affairs.

¹ There is a curious passage of St. Ambrose on this point. "Si quis igitur putat, conservatione virginum minui genus humanum, consideret, quia, ubi paucae virgines, ibi etiam pauciores homines: ubi virginitatis studia crebriora, ibi numerum quoque hominum esse majorem. Dicite, quantas Alexandrina, totiusque Orientis, et Africana ecclesia, quotannis sacrare consueverint. Pauciores hic homines prodeunt, quam illic virgines consecrantur" We should wish to know whether there was any statistical ground for this singular assertion, that, in those regions in which celibacy was most practised, the population increased; or whether Egypt, the East, and Africa were generally more prolific than Italy. The assertion that the vows of virginity in those countries exceeded the births in the latter is, most probably, to be set down to antithesis. Compare a good essay of Zumpt, in the Transactions of the Berlin Academy, 1840, on this subject. He concludes that Christianity generally tended to diminish the population of the empire (1863.)

could be combined from the whole Roman empire for their administration. This dereliction of their social duties by so many, could not but leave the competition more open to the base and unworthy; particularly as the actual abandonment of the world, and the capability of ardent enthusiasm, in men of high station or of commanding intellect, displayed a force and independence of character which might, it should seem, have rendered important active service to mankind. If barbarians were admitted by a perilous, yet inevitable policy, into the chief military commands, was not this measure at least hastened, not merely by the general influence of Christianity, which reluctantly permitted its votaries to enter into the army, but still more by Monachism, which withdrew them altogether into religious inactivity? The civil and fiscal departments, and especially that of public education conducted by salaried professors, might also be deprived of some of the most eligible and useful candidates for employment. At a time of such acknowledged deficiency, it may have appeared little less than treasonable indifference to the public welfare, to break all connection with mankind, and to dwell in unsocial seclusion entirely on individual interests. Such might have been the remonstrance of a sober and dispassionate Pagan,¹ and in part of those few more rational Christians, who could not consider the rigid monastic Christianity as the original religion of its divine founder.

If, indeed, this peaceful enthusiasm had counteracted any general outburst of patriotism, or left vacant or abandoned to worthless candidates posts in the public service which could be commanded by great talents

¹ Compare the law of Valens, *De Monachis*, quoted above.

and honorable integrity, Monachism might fairly be charged with weakening the energies and deadening the resistance of the Roman empire to its gathering and multiplying adversaries. But the state of public affairs probably tended more to the growth of Monachism, than Monachism to the disorder and disorganization of public affairs. The partial and unjust distribution of the rewards of public service; the uncertainty of distinction in any career, in which success entirely depended on the favoritism and intrigue within the narrow circle of the court; the difficulty of emerging to eminence under a despotism by fair and honorable means; disgust and disappointment at slighted pretensions and baffled hopes; the general and apparently hopeless oppression which weighed down all mankind; the total extinction of the generous feelings of freedom; the conscious decrepitude of the human mind; the inevitable conviction that its productive energies in knowledge, literature, and arts were extinct and effete, and that every path was pre-occupied, — all these concurrent motives might naturally, in a large proportion of the most vigorous and useful minds, generate a distaste and weariness of the world. Religion, then almost universally dominant, would seize on this feeling, and enlist it in her service; it would avail itself of, not produce, the despondent determination to abandon an ungrateful world; it would ennoble and exalt the preconceived motives for seclusion; give a kind of conscious grandeur to inactivity, and substitute a dreamy but elevating love for the Deity for contemptuous misanthropy, as the justification for the total desertion of social duty. Monachism, in short, instead of precipitating the fall of the Roman empire by enfeebling in any great de-

Some of its
advantages.

gree its powers of resistance, enabled some portion of mankind to escape from the feeling of shame and misery. Amid the irremediable evils and the wretchedness that could not be averted, it was almost a social benefit to raise some part of mankind to a state of serene indifference, to render some at least superior to the general calamities.

Monachism, indeed, directly secured many in their isolation from all domestic ties, from that worst suffering inflicted by barbarous warfare, the sight of beloved females outraged, and innocent children butchered. In those times, the man was happiest who had least to lose, and who exposed the fewest vulnerable points of feeling or sympathy. The natural affections, in which, in ordinary times, consists the best happiness of man, were in those days such perilous indulgences, that he who was entirely detached from them, embraced, perhaps, considering temporal views alone, the most prudent course. The solitary could but suffer in his own person; and though by no means secure in his sanctity from insult, or even death, his self-inflicted privations hardened him against the former, his high-wrought enthusiasm enabled him to meet the latter with calm resignation: he had none to leave whom he had to lament, none to lament him after his departure. The spoiler who found his way to his secret cell was baffled by his poverty; and the sword which cut short his days but shortened his painful pilgrimage on earth, and removed him at once to an anticipated heaven. With what different feelings would he behold, in his poor and naked and solitary cell, the approach of the blood-thirsty barbarians, from the father of a family, in his splendid palace, or his more modest and comfortable private dwelling, with a wife in his arms,

whose death he would desire to see rather than that worse than death to which she might first be doomed in his presence ; with helpless children clinging around his knees ; the blessings which he had enjoyed, the wealth or comfort of his house, the beauty of his wife, of his daughters, or even of his sons, being the strongest attraction to the spoiler, and irritating more violently that spoiler's merciless and unsparing passions. If to some the monastic state offered a refuge for the sad remainder of their bereaved life, others may have taken warning in time, and with deliberate forethought refused to implicate themselves in tender connections, which were threatened with such deplorable end. Those who secluded themselves from domestic relations from other motives, at all events, were secured from such miseries, and might be envied by those who had played the game of life for a higher stake, and ventured on its purest pleasures, with the danger of incurring all its bitterest reverses.

Monachism tended powerfully to keep up the vital enthusiasm of Christianity. Allusion has been made to its close connection with the conversion both of the Roman and the Bar-
Effect on the maintenance of Christianity.
barian ; and to the manner in which, from its settlement in some retired Pagan district, it gradually disseminated the faith, and sometimes the industrious, always the moral, influence of Christianity through the neighborhood in a gradually expanding circle. Its peaceful colonies, within the frontier of Barbarism, slowly but uninterruptedly subdued the fierce or indolent savages to the religion of Christ and the manners and habits of civilization. But its internal influence was not less visible, immediate, and inexhaustible. The more extensive dissemination of Christianity natu

rally weakened its authority. When the small primitive assembly of the Christians grew into an universal Church ; when the village, the town, the city, the province, the empire, became in outward form and profession Christian, — the practical Heathenism only retired to work more silently and imperceptibly into the Christian system. The wider the circle, the fainter the line of distinction from the surrounding waters. Small societies have a kind of self-acting principle of conservation within. Mutual inspection generates mutual awe ; the generous rivalry in religious attainment keeps up regularity in attendance on the sacred institutions, and at least propriety of demeanor. Such small communities may be disturbed by religious faction, but are long before they degenerate into unchristian licentiousness or languish into religious apathy. But when a large proportion of Christians received the faith as an inheritance from their fathers rather than from personal conviction ; when hosts of deserters from Paganism passed over into the opposite camp, not because it was the best, but because it was the most flourishing cause, — it became inexpedient, as well as impossible, to maintain the severer discipline of former times. But Monachism was constantly re-organizing small societies, in which the bond of aggregation was the common religious fervor, in which emulation continually kept up the excitement, and mutual vigilance exercised unre-sisted authority. The exaggeration of their religious sentiments was at once the tenure of their existence and the guarantee for their perpetuity. Men would never be wanting to enroll themselves in their ranks, and their constitution prevented them from growing to an unmanageable size. When one establishment or institution wore out, another was sure to spring up.

The republics of Monachism were constantly reverting to their first principles, and undergoing a vigorous and thorough reformation. Thus, throughout the whole of Christian history, until, or even after, the Reformation, within the Church of Rome, we find either new monastic orders rising, or the old remodelled and regulated by the zeal of some ardent enthusiast. The associatory principle, that great political and religious engine which is either the conservative or the destructive power in every period of society, was constantly embracing a certain number of persons devoted to a common end; and the new sect, distinguished by some peculiar badge of dress, of habit, or of monastic rule, re-embodied some of the fervor of primitive Christianity, and awakened the growing lethargy, by the example of unusual austerities or rare and exemplary activity in the dissemination of the faith.

The beneficial tendency of this constant formation of young and vigorous societies in the bosom of Christianity was of more importance in the times of desolation and confusion which impended over the Roman empire. In this respect, likewise, their lofty pretensions insured their utility. Where reason itself was about to be in abeyance, rational religion would have had but little chance: it would have commanded no respect. Christianity, in its primitive simple and unassuming form, might have imparted its holiness and peace and happiness to retired families, whether in the city or the province; but its modest and retiring dignity would have made no impression on the general tone and character of society. There was something in the seclusion of religious men from mankind, in their standing aloof from the rest of the world, calculated to impress barbarous minds with a feeling of

their peculiar sanctity. The less they were like to ordinary men, the more, in the ordinary estimation, they were approximated to the divinity. At all events, this apparently broad and manifest evidence of their religious sincerity would be more impressive to unreasoning minds than the habits of the clergy, which approached more nearly to those of the common laity.¹

The influence of this continual rivalry of another sacred though not decidedly sacerdotal class, upon the secular clergy, led to important results. We may perhaps ascribe to the constant presence of Monachism the continuance and the final recognition of the celibacy of the clergy, the vital principle of the ecclesiastical power in the Middle Ages. Without the powerful direct support which they received from the monastic orders; without the indirect authority over the minds of men which flowed from their example, and inseparably connected, in the popular mind, superior sanctity with the renunciation of marriage, — the ambitious popes would never have been able, particularly in the north, to part the clergy by this strong line of demarcation from the profane laity. As it was, it required the most vigorous and continued effort to establish, by ecclesiastical regulation and papal power, that which was no longer in accordance with the religious sentiments of the clergy themselves. The general practice of marriage,

Influence on
the clergy.

In promoting
celibacy.

¹ The monks were originally laymen (Cassian, v. 26): gradually churches were attached to the monasteries, but these were served by regularly ordained clergy (Pallad. Hist. Lausiaca.); but their reputation for sanctity constantly exposed them to be seized and consecrated by the ardent admiration of their followers. Theiner has collected with considerable labor a long list of the more celebrated prelates of the Church who had been monks, p. 106. "Ita ergo age et vive in monasterio ut clericus esse merearis." — Hieron. Epist. ad Rustic. 95

or of a kind of legalized concubinage, among the northern clergy, showed the tendency, if it had not been thus counteracted by the rival order, and by the dominant *ecclesiastical* policy of the Church.¹ But it is impossible to calculate the effect of that complete blending up of the clergy with the rest of the community, which would probably have ensued from the gradual abrogation of this single distinction at this juncture. The interests of their order, in men connected with the community by the ordinary social ties, would have been secondary to their own personal advancement, or that of their families. They would have ceased to be a peculiar and separate caste, and sunk down into the common penury, rudeness, and ignorance. Their influence would be closely connected with their wealth and dignity, which, of course, on the other hand, would tend to augment their influence; but that corporate ambition which induced them to consider the cause of their order as their own, that desire of riches which wore the honorable appearance of personal disinterestedness and zeal for the splendor of religion, could not have existed but in a class completely insulated from the common feelings and interests of the community. Individual members of the clergy might have become wealthy, and obtained authority over the ignorant herd; but there would have been no opulent and powerful Church, acting with vigorous unity, and arranged in simultaneous hostility against Barbarism and Paganism.

Our history must hereafter trace the connection of the independence and separate existence of the clergy

¹ The general question of the celibacy of the clergy will be subsequently examined. Compare Latin Christianity, especially the great struggle at Milan, book vi. c. iii.

with the maintenance and the authority of Christianity. But even as conservators of the lingering remains of science, arts, and letters, as the sole order to which some kind of intellectual education was necessary, when knowledge was a distinction which alone commanded respect, the clergy were, not without advantage, secured by their celibacy from the cares and toils of social life. In this respect, Monachism acted in two ways, — as itself the most efficient guardian of what was most worth preserving in the older civilization, and as preventing, partly by emulation, partly by this enforcement of celibacy, the secular clergy from degenerating universally into that state of total ignorance which prevailed among them in some quarters.

It is impossible to survey Monachism in its general influence, from the earliest period of its interworking into Christianity, without being astonished and perplexed with its diametrically opposite effects. Here, it is the undoubted parent of the blindest ignorance and the most ferocious bigotry, sometimes of the most debasing licentiousness; there, the guardian of learning, the author of civilization, the propagator of humble and peaceful religion. To the dominant spirit of Monachism may be ascribed some part at least of the gross superstition and moral inefficiency of the Church in the Byzantine empire; to the same spirit much of the salutary authority of Western Christianity, its constant aggressions on Barbarism, and its connection with the Latin literature. Yet neither will the different genius of the East and West account for this contradictory operation of the monastic spirit in the two divisions of the Roman empire. If human nature was degraded by the filth and fanatic self-torture, the callous apathy, and the occasional sanguinary violence,

of the Egyptian or Syrian monk, yet the monastic retreat sent forth its Basils and Chrysostoms, who seemed to have braced their strong intellects by the air of the desert. Their intrepid and disinterested devotion to their great cause, the complete concentration of their whole faculties on the advancement of Christianity, seemed strengthened by this entire detachment from mankind.

Nothing can be conceived more apparently opposed to the designs of the God of nature, and to the mild and beneficent spirit of Christianity; nothing more hostile to the dignity, the interests, the happiness, and the intellectual and moral perfection of man,—than the monk afflicting himself with unnecessary pain, and thrilling his soul with causeless fears; confined to a dull routine of religious duties; jealously watching, and proscribing every emotion of pleasure as a sin against the benevolent Deity; dreading knowledge as an impious departure from the becoming humility of man.

On the other hand, what generous or lofty mind can refuse to acknowledge the grandeur of that superiority to all the cares and passions of mortality, the felicity of that state which is removed far above the fears or the necessities of life, that sole passion of admiration and love of the Deity, which no doubt was attained by some of the purer and more imaginative enthusiasts of the cell or the cloister? Who, still more, will dare to depreciate that heroism of Christian benevolence, which underwent this self-denial of the lawful enjoyments and domestic charities of which it had neither extinguished the desire nor subdued the regret,—not from the slavish fear of displeasing the Deity, or the selfish ambition of personal perfection,

but from the genuine desire of advancing the temporal and eternal improvement of mankind, of imparting the moral amelioration and spiritual hopes of Christianity to the wretched and the barbarous, of being the messengers of Christian faith, and the ministers of Christian charity, to the Heathen, whether in creed or in character?

We return, from this long but not unnecessary digression, to the life of Jerome, the great advocate of Monachism in the West. Jerome began and closed his career as a monk of Palestine: he attained, he aspired to, no dignity in the Church. Though ordained a presbyter against his will, he escaped the episcopal dignity which was forced upon his distinguished contemporaries. He left to Ambrose, to Chrysostom, and to Augustine the authority of office, and was content with the lower but not less extensive influence of personal communication, or the effect of his writings. After having passed his youth in literary studies in Rome, and in travelling throughout the West, he visited Palestine. During his voyage to the East, he surveyed some great cities, and consulted their libraries: he was received in Cyprus by the bishop Epiphanius. In Syria, he plunged at once into the severest austerities of asceticism. I have already inserted the lively description of the inward struggles and agonies which tried him during his first retreat in the Arabian desert.

But Jerome had other trials peculiar to himself. It was not so much the indulgence of the coarser passions, the lusts, and ambition of the world, which distressed his religious sensibilities:¹ it was the

Life of
Jerome.

Trials of
Jerome in
his retreat.

¹ Jerome says, "Prima est virginitas à nativitate; secunda virginitas à secundâ nativitate:" he ingenuously confesses that he could only boast of the second. — Epist. xxv. iv. p. 242; Oper. iv. p. 459.

nobler and more intellectual part of his being which was endangered by the fond reminiscences of his former days. He began to question the lawfulness of those literary studies which had been the delight of his youth. He had brought with him, his sole companions, besides the sacred books of his religion, the great masters of poetry and philosophy, of Greek and Latin style; and the magic of Plato's and Cicero's language, to his refined and fastidious ear, made the sacred writings of Christianity, on which he was intently fixed, appear rude and barbarous. In his retreat in Bethlehem, he had undertaken the study of

His classical studies.

Hebrew,¹ as a severe occupation to withdraw him from those impure and worldly thoughts which his austerities had not entirely subdued; and, in the weary hours when he was disgusted with his difficult task, he could not refrain from recurring, as a solace, to his favorite authors. But even this indulgence alarmed his jealous conscience; though he fasted before he opened his Cicero, his mind dwelt with too intense delight on the language of the orator; and the distaste with which he passed from the musical periods of Plato to the verses of the Prophets, of which his ear had not yet perceived the harmony, and his Roman taste had not perhaps imbibed the full sublimity, appeared to him as an impious offence against his religion.² The inward struggles of his mind threw him into a fever; he was thought to be dead; and, in the lethargic dream of his distempered imagination, he thought that he be

¹ His description of Hebrew, as compared with Latin, is curious: "Ad quam edomandam, cuidem fratri, qui ex Hebræis crediderat, me in disciplinam dedi ut post Quintiliani acumina, gravitatemque Frontonis, et levitatem Plinii, alphabetum discerem et *stridentia anhelaque verba* meditarer — quid ibi laboris insumserim?" — Epist. xcvi. ad Rusticum, p. 774.

² "Si quando in memet reversus, Prophetas legere cœpissem, sermo horrebatur incultus." — Epist. xviii. ad Eustoch. iv. v. 42.

held himself before the throne of the great Judge, before the brightness of which he dared not lift up his eyes. "Who art thou?" demanded the awful voice. "A Christian," answered the trembling Jerome.¹ "'Tis false," sternly replied the voice; "thou art no Christian: thou art a Ciceronian. Where the treasure is, there is the heart also." Yet, however the scrupulous conscience of Jerome might tremble at this profane admixture of sacred and heathen studies, he was probably qualified in a high degree by this very discordant collision of opposite tastes for one of the great services which he was to render to Christianity. No writer, without that complete mastery over the Latin language which could only be attained by constant familiarity with its best models, could so have harmonized its genius with the foreign elements which were to be mingled with it, as to produce the vivid and glowing style of the Vulgate Bible. That this is far removed from the purity of Tully, no one will question: I shall hereafter consider more at length its genius and its influence; but we may conjecture what would have been the harsh, jarring, and inharmonious discord of the opposing elements, if the translator had only been conversant with the African Latinity of Tertullian, or the elaborate obscurity of writers like Ammianus Marcellinus.

Jerome could not, in the depths of his retreat, or in the absorbing occupation of his studies, escape being involved in those controversies which distracted the

¹ "Interim parantur exequiæ, et vitalis animæ calor, toto frigescente jam corpore, in solo tantum tepente pulvisculo, palpitabat; quum subito raptus in spiritu, ad tribunal judicis pertrahor; ubi tantum luminis, et tantum erat ex circumstantium claritate fulgoris, ut projectus in terram, sursum aspicere non auderem. Interrogatus de conditione, Christianum me esse respondi Et ille qui præsidebat mortuis ait, Ciceronianus es, non Christianus; *ubi enim thesaurus tuus, ibi et cor tuum.*" — Ad. Eustoch. Epist. xviii. iv. p. 42.

Eastern churches, and penetrated to the cell of the remotest anchorite. He returned to the West to avoid the restless polemics of his brother monks.

On his return to Rome, the fame of his piety Return to Rome. and talents commended him to the confidence of the pope Damasus,¹ by whom he was employed in the most important affairs of the Roman see. But either the influence or the opinions of Jerome excited the jealousy of the Roman clergy, whose Morality of the Roman clergy. vices Jerome paints in no softened colors. We almost, in this contest, behold a kind of prophetic prelude to the perpetual strife, which has existed in almost all ages, between the secular and regular clergy, the hierarchical and monastic spirit. Though the monastic opinions and practices were by no means unprecedented in Italy (they had been first introduced by Athanasius in his flight from Egypt); though they were maintained by Ambrose, and practised by some recluses, — yet the pomp, the wealth, and the authority of the Roman ecclesiastics, which is described by the concurrent testimony of the Heathen historian² and the Christian Jerome, would not humbly brook the greater popularity of these severer doctrines, nor patiently submit to the estrangement of some of their more opulent and distinguished proselytes, particularly among the females. Jerome admits, indeed, with specious but doubtful humility, the inferiority of the unordained monk to the ordained priest. The clergy were the successors of the apostles; their lips could make the body of Christ; they had the keys of heaven, until the day of Judgment. They were the shepherds; the monks, only part of the flock. Yet the clergy, no doubt, had the sagacity to foresee the dangerous rival,

¹ Epist. xii. p. 744. Tillemont, Vie de Jerome.

² Ammianus Marcellinus. See *postea*

as to influence and authority, which was rising up in Christian society. The great object of contention now was the command over the high-born and wealthy females of Rome. Jerome, in his advice to the clergy, cautiously warns them against the danger of female intimacy.¹ He, however, either considered himself secure, or under some peculiar privilege, or justified by the prospect of greater utility, to suspend his laws on his own behalf. He became a kind of confessor, he directed the sacred studies, he overlooked the religious conduct of more than one of these pious ladies. The ardor and vehemence with which his ascetic opinions were embraced, and the more than usually familiar intercourse with matrons and virgins of rank, may perhaps have offended the pride, if not the propriety, of Roman manners. The more temperate and rational of the clergy, in their turn, may have thought the zeal with which these female converts of Jerome were prepared to follow their teacher to the Holy Land, by no means a safe precedent; they may have taken alarm at the unusual fervor of language with which female ascetics were celebrated as united, by the nuptial tie, to Christ,² and exhorted, in the glowing imagery of the Song of Solomon, to devote themselves to their spiritual spouse. They were the brides of Christ: Christ, worshipped by angels in

Influence
over females
of Rome.

¹ Epist. ad Heliodorum, p. 10.

² See the Epistle ad Eustochium. The whole of this letter is a singular union of religious earnestness and what, to modern feeling, would seem strange indelicacy, if not immodesty, and still stranger liberty with the language of Scripture. He seems to say that Eustochium was the first noble Roman maiden who embraced virginity: "Quæ . . . prima Romanæ urbis virgo nobilis esse cœpisti." He says, however, of Marcella, "Nulla eo tempore nobilium fœminarum noverat Romæ propositum monacharum, nec audebat propter rei novitatem, ignominiosum, ut tunc putabatur, et vile in populis, nomen assumere. — Marcellæ Epitaph, p. 780.

heaven, ought to have angels to worship him on earth.¹ With regard to Jerome and his high-born friends, their suspicions were, doubtless, unjust.

It is singular, indeed, to contrast the different descriptions of the female aristocracy of Rome at the various periods of her history: the secluded and dignified matrons, the Volumnias or Cornelias, employed in household duties, and educating with severe discipline, for the military and civil service of the state, her future consuls and dictators; the gorgeous luxury, the almost incredible profligacy, of the later days of the republic and of the empire, the Julias and Messalinas, so darkly colored by the satirists of the times; the active charity and the stern austerities of the Paulas and Eustochiums of the present period. It was not, in general, the severe and lofty Roman matron of the age of Roman virtue whom Christianity induced to abandon her domestic duties, and that highest of all duties to her country, the bringing up of noble and virtuous citizens: it was the soft and at the same time the savage female, who united the incongruous, but too frequently reconciled, vices of sensuality and cruelty; the female, whom the facility of divorce, if she abstained from less lawful indulgence, enabled to gratify in a more decent manner her inconstant passions; who had been inured from her most tender age, not merely to theatrical shows of questionable modesty, but to the bloody scenes of the arena, giving the signal perhaps with her own delicate hand for the mortal blow to the exhausted gladiator. We behold with wonder, not unmixed with

¹ In Jerome's larger interpretation of Solomon's Song (adv. Jovin. p. 171) is a very curious and whimsical passage, alluding to the Saviour as the spouse. There is one sentence, however, in the letter to Eustochium, so blasphemously indecent that it must not be quoted even in Latin. — p. 38.

admiration, women of the same race and city either forswearing from their earliest youth all intercourse with men, or preserving the state of widowhood with irreproachable dignity; devoting their wealth to the foundation of hospitals, and their time to religious duties and active benevolence. These monastic sentiments were carried to that excess which seemed inseparable from the Roman character. At twelve years old, the young Asella devoted herself to God; from that time she had never conversed with a man; her knees were as hard as a camel's, by constant genu-

Paula.

flexion and prayer.¹ Paula, the fervent disciple of Jerome, after devoting the wealth of an ancient and opulent house to charitable uses,² to the impoverishment of her own children, deserted her family. Her infant son and her marriageable daughter watched, with entreating looks, her departure; she did not even turn her head away to hide her maternal tears, but lifted up her unmoistened eyes to heaven, and continued her pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Jerome celebrates this sacrifice of the holiest charities of life as the height of female religious heroism.³

¹ Hieronym. Epist. xxi.

² Jerome thus describes the charity of Paula: "Quid ego referam, amplæ et nobilis domus, et quondam opulentissimæ, omnes pæne divitias in pauperes erogatas. Quid in cunctos clementissimum animum, et bonitatem etiam in eos quos nunquam viderat, evagantem. Quis inopum moriens, non illius vestimentis obvolutus est? Quis clinicorum non ejus facultatibus sustentatus est? Quos curiosissimè totâ urbe perquirens, damnum putabat, si quis debilis et esuriens cibo sustentaretur alterius. *Spoliabat filios*, et inter objurantes propinquos, majorem se eis hæreditatem, Christi misericordiam dimittere loquebatur." — Epitaph. Paulæ, p. 671. At her death, Jerome relates, with great pride, that she did not leave a penny to her daughter, but a load of debts (magnum æs alienum).

³ It is a passage of considerable beauty: "Descendit ad portum, fratre, cognatis, affinibus, et (quod his majus est) liberis prosequentibus, et clementissimam matrem pietate vincere cupientibus. Jam carbasa tendebantur, et remorum ductu navis in altum protrahebatur. Parvus Toxotius supplices

The vehement and haughty temper of Jerome was not softened by his monastic austerities, nor humbled by the severe proscription of the gentler affections. His life, in the capital and in the desert, was one long warfare. After the death of his friend and protector, Damasus, the growing hostility of the clergy, notwithstanding the attachment of his disciples, rendered his residence in Rome disagreeable. Nor was the peace of the monastic life his reward for his zealous exertions in its cause. He retired to Palestine, where he passed the rest of his days in religious studies, and in polemic disputes. Wherever any dissentient from the doctrine or the practice of the dominant Christianity ventured to express his opinions, Jerome launched the thunders of his interdict from his cell at Bethlehem. No one was more perpetually involved in controversy, or opposed with greater rancor of personal hostility, than this earnest advocate of unworldly religious seclusion. He was engaged in a vehement dispute with St. Augustine on the difference between St. Peter and St. Paul. But his repose was most embittered by the acrimonious and obstinate contest with Rufinus, which was rather a personal than a polemic strife.

Controversies
of Jerome.

Retreat to
Palestine.

manus tendebat in littora. Rufina, jam nubilis, ut suas expectaret nuptias, tacens fletibus obsecrabat, et tamen illa siccos ad cœlum oculos, pietatem in filios, pietate in Deum superans, nesciebat se matrem ut Christi probaret ancillam. . . . Hoc contra jura naturæ plena fides patiebatur, imo gaudens animus appetebat. — Epitaph. Paulæ, 672.

This was her epitaph:—

Aspicias angustum præcisâ rupe sepulcrum?
Hospitum Paulæ est, coelestia regna tenentis
Fratrem, cognatos, Romam, patriamque relinquens,
Divitias, sobolem, Bethlehemite conditur antro.
Hic præsepe tuum, Christe, atque hic mystica Magi
Munera portantes, hominique, Deoque dederunt

In one controversy, Christendom acknowledged and hailed him as her champion. Jovinian and Vigilantius. Vigilantius are involved in the dark list of heretics; but their error appears to have been that of unwisely attempting to stem the current of popular Christian opinion, rather than any departure from the important doctrines of Christianity. They were premature Protestants; they endeavored, with vain and ill-timed efforts, to arrest the encroaching spirit of Monachism, which had now enslaved the whole of Christianity;¹ they questioned the superior merit of celibacy; they protested against the growing worship of relics.² Their effect upon the dominant sentiment of the times may be estimated by the language of wrath, bitterness, contempt, and abhorrence, with which Jerome assails these bold men, who thus presumed to encounter the spirit of their age. The four points of Jovinian's heresy were,—1st, that virgins had no higher merit, unless superior in their good works, than widows and married women; 2d, that there was no distinction of meats; 3d, that those who had been baptized in full faith would not be overcome by the Devil; and, 4th, that those who had preserved the grace of baptism would meet with an equal reward in heaven. This last clause was perhaps a corollary from the first, as the panegyrists of virgin-

¹ Hieronym. adv. Vigilantium, p. 281.

² The observation of Fleury shows how mistimed was the attempt of Vigilantius to return to the simpler Christianity of former days: "On ne voit pas que l'hérésie (de Vigilance), ait eu de suite; ni qu'on ait eu besoin d'aucun concile pour la condamner tant elle étoit contraire à la tradition de l'Eglise Universelle." — tom. v. p. 278.

I have purposely, lest I should overstrain the *Protestantism* of these remarkable men, taken this view of their tenets from Fleury, perhaps the fairest and most dispassionate writer of his Church. — tom. iv. p. 602; tom. v. p. 276.

ity uniformly claimed a higher place in heaven for the immaculate than for those who had been polluted by marriage. To those doctrines Vigilantius added, if possible, more hated tenets. He condemned the respect paid to the martyrs and their relics; he questioned the miracles performed at their tombs; he condemned the lighting lamps before them, as a Pagan superstition; he rejected the intercession of the saints; he blamed the custom of sending alms to Jerusalem, and the selling all property to give it to the poor; he asserted that it was better to keep it, and distribute its revenues in charity; he protested against the whole monastic life, as interfering with the duty of a Christian to his neighbor. These doctrines were not without their followers; the resentment of Jerome was imbibed by their effect on some of the noble ladies of Rome, who began to fall off to marriage. Even some bishops embraced the doctrines of Vigilantius, and, asserting that the high professions of continence led the way to debauchery, refused to ordain unmarried deacons.

The tone of Jerome's indignant writings against those new heretics is that of a man suddenly arrested in his triumphant career by some utterly unexpected opposition; his resentment at being thus crossed is mingled with a kind of wonder that men should exist who could entertain such strange and daring tenets. The length, it might be said the prolixity, to which he draws out his answer to Jovinian, seems rather the outpouring of his wrath and his learning, than as if he considered it necessary to refute such obvious errors. Throughout it is the master condescending to teach, not the adversary to argue. He fairly overwhelms him with a mass of Scripture, and of classical learning;

at one time he pours out a flood of allegorical interpretations of the Scripture; he then confounds him with a clever passage from Theophrastus on the miseries of marriage. Even the friends of Jerome, the zealous Pammachius himself, were offended by the fierceness of his first invective against Jovinian,¹ and his contemptuous disparagement of marriage. The injustice of his personal charges is shown, and the charges refuted, by the more temperate statements of Augustine, and by his own admissions.² He was obliged, in his apology, to mitigate his vehemence, and reluctantly to fall into a milder strain; but even the Apology has something of the severe and contemptuous tone of an orator who is speaking on the popular side, with his audience already in his favor.

But his language to Jovinian is sober, dispassionate, and argumentative, in comparison with that to Vigilantius. He describes all the monsters ever invented by poetic imagination, — the centaurs, the leviathan, the Nemean lion, Cacus, Geryon. Gaul, by
Vigilantius.
her one monster, Vigilantius,³ had surpassed

1 "Indignamini mihi, quod Jovinianum non docuerim, sed vicerim. Imo indignantur mihi qui illum anathematizatum dolent." — Apolog. p. 236.

2 Jerome admits that Jovinian did not assert the privilege which he vindicated; he remained a monk, though Jerome highly colors his luxurious habits. After his coarse tunic and bare feet, and food of bread and water, he has betaken himself to white garments, sweetened wine, and highly dressed meats: to the sauces of an Apicius or a Paxamus, to baths, and shampooings (*friticulæ*, — the Benedictines translate this fritter-shops), and cooks' shops, it is manifest that he prefers earth to heaven, vice to virtue, his belly to Christ, and thinks his rubicund color (*purpuram coloris ejus*) the kingdom of heaven. Yet this handsome, this corpulent, smooth monk always goes in white like a bridegroom: let him marry a wife to prove the equal value of virginity and marriage; but if he will not take a wife, though he is against us in his words, his actions are for us. He afterwards says, "Ille Romanæ ecclesiæ auctoritate damnatus inter fluviales aves, et carnes suillas, non tam emisit animam quam eructavit." — p. 183.

3 His brief sketch of the enormities of Vigilantius is as follows: "Qui

all the pernicious and portentous horrors of other regions. "Why do I fly to the desert? That I may not see or hear thee; that I may no longer be moved by thy madness, nor be provoked to war by thee; lest the eye of a harlot should captivate me, and a beautiful form seduce me to unlawful love." But his great and conclusive argument in favor of reverence for the dust of martyrs (that little dust which, covered with a precious veil, Vigilantius presumed to think but dust) is universal authority. "Was the emperor Constantine sacrilegious, who transported the relics of Andrew, Luke, and Timothy to Constantinople, at whose presence the devils (such devils as inhabit the wretched Vigilantius) roar and are confounded? or the emperor Arcadius, who translated the bones of the holy Samuel to Thrace? Are all the bishops sacrilegious who enshrined these precious remains in silk, as a vessel of gold; and all the people who met them, and received them as it were the living prophet? Is the Bishop of Rome, who offers sacrifice on the altar under which are the venerable bones (the vile dust, would Vigilantius say?) of Peter and Paul; and not the bishop of one city alone, but the bishops of all the cities in the world who reverence these relics, around which the souls of the martyrs are constantly hovering to hear the prayers of the suppliant?"

The great work of Jerome, the authoritative Latin version of the Scriptures, will demand our attention, as one of the primary elements of Christian literature; a subject which must form one most important branch

*immundo spiritu pugnat contra Christi spiritum, et martyrum negat sepulcra esse veneranda; damnandas dicit esse vigilias; nunquam nisi in Pascha Alleluia cantandum: continentiam hæresim, pudicitiam libidinis semina-
rium."*

of our inquiry into the extent and nature of the general revolution in the history of mankind, brought about by the complete establishment of Christianity.¹

¹ Compare Latin Christianity, book i. ch. 2. Note on Jerome, especially the passages about the destruction of Rome by Alaric vol. i. p. 101

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

The Roman Empire under Christianity.

THE period is now arrived when we may survey the total change in the habits and manners, as well as in the sentiments and opinions, of mankind, effected by the dominance of the new faith. Christianity is now the mistress of the Roman world; on every side the struggles of Paganism become more feeble; it seems resigned to its fate, or rather only hopes, by a feigned allegiance and a simulation of the forms and language of Christianity, to be permitted to drag on a precarious and inglorious existence. The Christians are now no longer a separate people, founding and maintaining their small independent republics, fenced in by marked peculiarities of habits and manners from the rest of society: they have become, to all outward appearance, *the people*; the general manners of the world may be contemplated as the manners of Christendom. The monks, and in some respects the clergy, have, as it were, taken the place of the Christians as a separate and distinct body of men; the latter in a great degree, the former altogether, differing from the prevalent usages in their modes of life, and abstaining from the common pursuits

and avocations of society. The Christian writers, therefore, become our leading, almost our only, authorities for the general habits and manners of mankind (for the notice of such matters in the Sources of information. Heathen writers are few and casual), except Theodosian code. the Theodosian code. This, indeed, is of great value as a record of manners as well as a history of legislation; for that which demands the prohibition of the law, or is in any way of sufficient importance to require the notice of the legislature, may be considered as a prevalent custom: particularly as the Theodosian code is not a system of abstract and general law, but the register of the successive edicts of the emperors, who were continually supplying, by their arbitrary acts, the deficiencies of the existing statutes, or, as new cases arose, adapting those statutes to temporary exigencies.

But the Christian preachers are the great painters of Roman manners: Chrysostom of the East, Christian writers. more particularly of Constantinople; Jerome, and, though much less copiously, Ambrose and Augustine, of Roman Christendom. Considerable allowance must, of course, be made in all these statements for oratorical vehemence; much more for the ascetic habits of the writers, particularly of Chrysostom, who maintained, and would have exacted, the rigid austerity of the desert in the midst of a luxurious capital. Nor must the general morality of the times be estimated from their writings without considerable discretion. It is the office of the preacher, though with a different design, yet with something of the manner of the satirist, to select the vices of mankind for his animadversion, and to dwell with far less force on the silent and unpretending virtues. There might

be, and probably was, an under-current of quiet Christian piety and gentleness and domestic happiness, which would not arrest the notice of the preacher who was denouncing the common pride and luxury, or, if kindling into accents of praise, was enlarging on the austere self-denial of the anchorite, or the more shining virtues of the saint.

Christianity disturbed not the actual relations of society; it interfered in no way with the existing gradations of rank. Though, as we shall see, it introduced a new order of functionaries,—what may be considered, from the estimation in which they were held, a new aristocracy,—it left all the old official dignitaries in possession of their distinctions. With the great vital distinction between the free-
man and the slave, as yet it made no differ-
ence.¹ It broke down none of the barriers which separated this race of men from the common rights of human kind; and in no degree legally brought up this Pariah caste of antiquity to the common level of the human race.

Slavery.

In the new relation established between mankind and the Supreme Being, the slave was fully participant: he shared in the redemption through Christ; he might receive all the spiritual blessings, and enjoy all the immortalizing hopes, of the believer; he might be dismissed from his death-bed to heaven by the absolving voice of the priest; and, besides this inestimable consolation in misery and degradation, this religious equality, at least with the religious part of the community, could not fail to elevate his condition, and to strengthen that claim to the sympathies of mankind which was enforced by Christian humanity. The

¹ The laws of Justinian, it must be remembered, are beyond this period

axiom of Clement of Alexandria, that, by the common law of Christian charity, we were to act to them as we would be acted by, because they were men,¹ though perhaps it might have been uttered with equal strength of language by some of the better philosophers, spoke with far more general acceptance to the human heart. The manumission, which was permitted by Constantine to take place in the Church, must likewise have tended indirectly to connect freedom with Christianity.²

Still, down to the time of Justinian, the inexorable law, which, as to their treatment, had already been wisely tempered by the Heathen emperors, as to their *rights* pronounced the same harsh and imperious sentence. It beheld them as an inferior class of human beings; their life was placed but partially under the protection of the law. If they died under a punishment of extraordinary cruelty, the master was guilty of homicide; if under more moderate application of the scourge, or any other infliction, the master was not accountable for their death.³ While it refused to protect, the law inflicted on the slave punishments disproportionate to those of the freeman. If he accused his master for any crime, except high treason, he was to be burned;⁴ if free women married slaves, they sank to the abject state of their husbands, and forfeited their rights as free women;⁵ if a free woman intrigued with a slave, she was capitally punished, the slave was burned.⁶

The possession of slaves was in no degree limited by

¹ Clemens Alex. *Pædagog.* iii. 12.

² See Blair on Slavery, p. 288.

³ Cod. Theodos. ix. 12, 1.

⁴ Ibid. ix. 6, 2.

⁵ Ibid. iv. 9, 1, 2, 3.

⁶ Ibid. ix. 11, 1. Since the publication of this book has appeared the best and most comprehensive work on that subject, — Wallon's *Histoire de l'Esclavage dans l'Antiquité*.

law. It was condemned as a mark of inordinate 'luxury, but by no means as in itself contrary to Christian justice or equity.¹

On the pomp and magnificence of the court, Christianity either did not aspire, or despaired of enforcing moderation or respect for the common dignity of mankind. The manners of the East, as the emperor took up his residence in Constantinople, were too strong for the religion. With the first Christian emperor commenced that Oriental ceremonial which it might almost seem, that, rebuked by the old liberties of Rome, the imperial despot would not assume till he had founded another capital; or at least, if the first groundwork of this Eastern pomp was laid by Diocletian, Rome had already been deserted, and was not insulted by the open degradation of the first men in the empire to the language, attitudes, and titles of servitude.

The eunuchs, who, however admitted in solitary instances to the confidence or favor of the earlier emperors, had never formed a party or handed down to each other the successive administrations, now ruled in almost uncontested sovereignty; and, except in some rare instances, seemed determined not to incur, without deserving, the antipathy and contempt of mankind. The luxury and prodigality of the court equalled its pomp and its servility. The parsimonious reformation introduced by Julian may exaggerate, in its contemptuous expressions, the thousand cooks, the thousand barbers, and more than a thousand cup-bearers, with the host of eunuchs and drones

¹ Clemens Alex. *Pædagog.* iii. 12. It is curious to compare this passage of Clement with the beautiful essay of Seneca. See likewise Chrysostom, *almost passim*. Some had two or three thousand. — t. vii. p. 633.

of every description who lived at the charge of the emperor Constantius.¹ The character of Theodosius gave an imposing dignity to his resumption of that magnificence, of which Julian, not without affectation, had displayed his disdain. The Heathen writers, perhaps with the design of contrasting Theodosius with the severer Julian, who are the representatives, or at least each the pride, of the opposing parties, describe the Christian as immoderately indulging in the pleasures of the table, and of re-enlisting in the imperial service a countless multitude of cooks and other attendants on the splendor and indulgence of the court.²

That which in Theodosius was the relaxation or the reward for military services, and the cares and agitations of an active administration, degenerated with his feeble sons into indolent and effeminate luxury. The head of the empire became a secluded Asiatic despot. When, on rare occasions, Arcadius condescended to reveal to the public the majesty of the sovereign, he was preceded by a vast multitude of attendants, dukes, tribunes, civil and military officers, their horses glittering with golden ornaments, with shields of gold set with precious stones, and golden lances. They proclaimed the coming of the emperor, and commanded the ignoble crowd to clear the streets before him.³ The emperor stood or reclined on a gorgeous chariot, surrounded by his immediate attendants, distinguished by shields with golden bosses set round with golden eyes, and drawn by white mules with gilded trappings; the

¹ Libanius, Epitaph. Julian. p. 565.

² Zosimus, iv. 28.

³ Montfaucon, in an essay in the last volume of the works of Chrysostom, and in the twelfth volume of the *Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions and Müller*, in his treatise *De Genio, Moribus, et Luxu Ævi Theodosiani*, have collected the principal features of this picture, chiefly from Chrysostom.

chariot was set with precious stones ; and golden fans vibrated with the movement, and cooled the air. The multitude contemplated at a distance the snow-white cushions, the silken carpets with dragons inwoven upon them in rich colors. Those who were fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of the emperor beheld his ears loaded with golden rings, his arms with golden chains, his diadem set with gems of all hues, his purple robes, which with the diadem were reserved for the emperor, in all their sutures embroidered with precious stones. The wondering people, on their return to their homes, could talk of nothing but the splendor of the spectacle, the robes, the mules, the carpets, the size and splendor of the jewels. On his return to the palace, the emperor walked on gold ; ships were employed with the express purpose of bringing gold dust¹ from remote provinces, which was strewn by the officious care of a host of attendants, so that the emperor rarely set his foot on the bare pavement.

The official aristocracy, which had succeeded to the hereditary patriciate of Rome, reflected in more moderate splendor, and less unapproachable seclusion, the manners of the court. The chief civil offices were filled by men of ignoble birth, often eunuchs. These, by the prodigal display of their ill-acquired wealth, insulted the people, who admired, envied, and hated their arrogant state. The military officers, in the splendor of their trappings and accoutrements, vied with the gorgeousness of the court-favorites ; and even the barbarians, who began to force their way by their valor to these posts, in the capital caught the infection of luxury and pomp. As in all

The aristocracy.

¹ Χρυσόν. See Müller, p. 10.

despotisms, especially in the East, there was a rapid rise and fall of unworthy favorites, whose vices, exactions, and oppressions were unsparingly laid open by hostile writers, directly they had lost the protecting favor of the court. Men then found out that the enormous wealth, the splendor, the voluptuousness, in which an Eutropius or a Rufinus had indulged, had been obtained by the sale of appointments, by vast bribes from provincial governors, by confiscations, and every abuse of inordinate power.¹

Christianity had not the power to elevate despotism into a wise and beneficent rule, or to dignify its inseparable consequence, court favoritism. Yet after all, feeble and contemptible as are many of the Christian emperors, pusillanimous even in their vices; odious as was the tyranny of their ministers,—they may bear no unfavorable comparison with the Heathen emperors of Rome. Human nature is not so outraged, our belief in the possible depravity of man is not so severely tried, as by the monstrous vices and cruelties of a Tiberius, a Caligula, or a Nero. Theodora even, if we credit the malignant satire of Procopius, maintained some decency upon the throne. The superstitions of the emperors debased Christianity; the Christian bishop was degraded by being obliged at times to owe his promotion to an eunuch

¹ "Hic Asiam villâ pactus regit; ille redemit
Conjugis ornatu Syriam; dolet ille paternâ
Bithynos mutâsse domo. Suffixa patenti
Vestibulo pretiis distinguit regula gentes."

Claud. in Eutrop. i. 199.

" . . . clientes

Fallit, et ambitos à principe vendit honores.

Congestæ cumulantur opes, orbisque rapinas

Accipit una domus. Populi servire coacti

Plenaque privato succumbunt oppida regno."

In Rufin. i. 179-183.

or a favorite; yet even the most servile and intriguing of the hierarchy could not be entirely forgetful of their high mission; there was still a kind of moral repugnance, inseparable from the character they bore, which kept them above the general debasement.

The aristocratical life, at this period, seems to have been characterized by gorgeous magnificence without grandeur, inordinate luxury without refinement, the pomp and prodigality of a high state of civilization with none of its ennobling or humanizing effects. The walls of the palaces were lined with marbles of all colors, crowded with statues of inferior workmanship, mosaics, of which the merit consisted in the arrangement of the stones; the cost, rather than the beauty or elegance, was the test of excellence, and the object of admiration. The nobles were surrounded with hosts of parasites or servants. "You reckon up," Chrysostom thus addresses a patrician, "so many acres of land, ten or twenty palaces, as many baths, a thousand or two thousand slaves, chariots plated with silver or overlaid with gold."¹

Manners of
the aristoc-
racy.

Their banquets were merely sumptuous, without social grace or elegance. The dress of the females, the fondness for false hair, sometimes wrought up to an enormous height, and especially affecting the golden dye, and for paint, from which irresistible propensities they were not to be estranged even by religion, excite the stern animadversion of the ascetic Christian teacher. "What business have rouge and paint on a Christian cheek? Who can weep for her sins when her tears wash her face bare and mark furrows on her skin? With what trust can faces be lifted up towards heaven, which the Maker

Females.

¹ T. vii. p. 533.

cannot recognize as his own workmanship?"¹ Their necks, heads, arms, and fingers, were loaded with golden chains and rings; their persons breathed precious odors, their dresses were of gold stuff and silk; and in this attire they ventured to enter the church. Some of the wealthier Christian matrons gave a religious air to their vanity: while the more profane wore their thin silken dresses embroidered with hunting pieces, wild beasts, or any other fanciful device, the more pious had the miracles of Christ, the marriage in Cana of Galilee, or the paralytic carrying his bed. In vain the preachers urged that it would be better to emulate these acts of charity and love, than to wear them on their garments.²

It might indeed be supposed, that Christianity, by the extinction of that feeling for the beauty, grandeur, and harmony of outward form, which was a part of the religion of Greece, and was enforced by her purer and loftier philosophy, may have contributed to this total depravation of the taste. Those who had lost the finer feeling for the pure and noble in art and in social life, would throw themselves into the gorgeous, the sumptuous, and the extravagant. But it was rather the Roman character than the influence of Christianity which was thus fatal to the refinements of life. The degeneracy of taste was almost complete before the predominance of the new religion. The manners of ancient Rome had descended from the earlier empire,³ and the manners of Constantinople

¹ Hieronym. Epist. 54. Compare Epist. 19, vol. i. p. 284.

² Müller, p. 112. There are several statutes prohibiting the use of gold brocade or dresses of silk in the Theodosian Code. — x. tit. 20. Other statutes regulate the dress in Rome. — xiv. 10, 1.

³ Compare the description of the manners and habits of the Roman nobles in Ammianus Marcellinus, so well transferred into English in the thirty-first chapter of Gibbon, vol. v. p. 258-268.

were in most respects an elaborate imitation of those of Rome.

The provincial cities, according to the national character, imitated the old and new Rome; and in all, no doubt, the nobility, or the higher order, were of the same character and habits.

On the appointment to the provincial governments, and the high civil offices of the empire, Christianity at this time exercised by no means a commanding, certainly no exclusive, influence. Either superior merit, or court intrigue, or favor, bestowed civil offices with impartial hand on Christian and Pagan. The Rufinus or the Eutropius cared little whether the bribe was offered by a worshipper in the church or in the temple. The Heathen Themistius was appointed Prefect of Constantinople by the intolerant Theodosius; Prætextatus and Symmachus held the highest civil functions in Rome. The prefect who was so obstinate an enemy to Chrysostom was Optatus, a Pagan. At a later period, as I have observed, a statue was raised to the Heathen poet Merobaudes.

But, besides the officers of the imperial government, of the provinces, and the municipalities, there now appeared a new order of functionaries, with recognized if undefined powers,—the religious magistrates of the religious community. In this magisterial character, the new hierarchy differed from the ancient priesthoods, at least of Greece and Rome. In Greece, these were merely the officiating dignitaries in the religious ceremonial: in Rome, the pontifical was attached to, and in effect merged in, the important civil function. But Christianity had its own distinct and separate aristocracy, which not merely officiated in the church, but ruled the public mind, and mingled

itself with the various affairs of life, far beyond this narrow sphere of religious ministration.

The Christian hierarchy was completely organized and established in the minds of men before the great revolutions which, under Constantine, legalized Christianity, and, under Theodosius and his successors, identified the Church and state. The strength of the sacerdotal power was consolidated before it came into inevitable collision, or had to dispute its indefinable limits with the civil authority. Mankind was now submitted to a double dominion, — the civil supremacy of the emperor and his subordinate magistrates, and that of the bishop with his inferior priesthood.

Up to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the state, the clerical order had been the sole magistracy of the new communities. But it is not alone from the scantiness of authentic documents concerning the earliest Christian history, but from the inevitable nature of things, that the development of the hierarchical power, as has already been partially shown,¹ was gradual and untraceable. In the infant Christian community, we have seen that the chief teacher and the ruler, almost immediately, if not immediately, became the same person. It was not so much that he was formally invested in authority, as that his advice, his guidance, his control, were sought on all occasions with timid diffidence, and obeyed with unhesitating submission. In the Christian, if it may be so said, the civil was merged in the religious being: he abandoned willingly his rights as a citizen, almost as a man, his independence of thought and action, in order to be taught conformity to the new doctrines which he had em

Gradual
develop-
ment of the
hierarchical
power.

¹ Book ii. ch. 4.

braced, and the new rule of life to which he had submitted himself. Community of sentiment, rather than any strict federal compact, was the primary bond of the Christian republic; and this general sentiment, even prior, perhaps, to any formal nomination or ordination, designated the heads and the subordinate rulers, the bishops, the presbyters, and the deacons; and therefore, where all agreed, there was no question in whom resided the right of conferring the title.¹

The simple ceremonial of "laying on of hands," which dedicated the individual for his especial function, ratified and gave its religious character to this popular election which took place by a kind of silent acclamation; and without this sacred commission by the bishop, no one, from the earliest times of which we have any record, presumed, it should seem, to invest himself in the sacred office.² The civil and religious power of the hierarchy grew up side by side, or intertwined with each other, by the same spontaneous vital energy. Every thing in the primary formation of the communities tended to increase the power of their ecclesiastical superiors. The investiture of the blended teacher and ruler in a sacred, and at length in a sacerdotal character, the rigid separation of this sacred

¹ The growth of the Christian hierarchy, and the general constitution of the Church, are developed with learning, candor, and moderation, by Planck, in his *Geschichte der Christlich-Kirchlichen Verfassung*. Hanover, 1803.

² Gradually the admission to orders became a subject not merely of ecclesiastical, but of civil regulation. It has been observed that the decurion was prohibited from taking orders, in order to obtain exemption from the duties of his station. — *Cod. Theod.* xii. 1, 49. No slave, curialis, officer of the court, public debtor, procurator, or collector of the purple dye (*murilegulus*), or one involved in business, might be ordained, or, if ordained, might be reclaimed to his former state. — *Cod. Theod.* ix. 45, 3. This was a law of the close of the fourth century, A.D. 398. The Council of Illiberis had made a restriction, that no freedman, whose patron was a Gentile, could be ordained he was still too much under control. — *Can. lxxx.*

order from the mass of the believers, could not but arise out of the unavoidable development of the religion. It was not their pride or ambition that withdrew them, but the reverence of the people which enshrined them in a separate sphere : they did not usurp or even assume their power and authority ; it was heaped upon them by the undoubting and prodigal confidence of the community. The hopes and fears of men would have forced this honor upon them, had they been humbly reluctant to accept it. Man, in his state of religious excitement, imperiously required some authorized interpreters of those mysterious revelations from heaven which he could read himself but imperfectly and obscurely ; he felt the pressing necessity of a spiritual guide. The privileges and distinctions of the clergy, so far from being aggressions on his religious independence, were solemn responsibilities undertaken for the general benefit. The Christian commonalty, according to the general sentiment, could not have existed without them, nor could such necessary but grave functions be intrusted to casual or common hands. No individual felt himself safe, except under their superintendence. Their sole right of entering the sanctuary arose as much out of the awe of the people as out of their own self-invested holiness of character. The trembling veneration for the mysteries of the sacrament must by no means be considered as an artifice to exalt themselves as the sole guardians and depositaries of these blessings ; it was the genuine expression of their own profoundest feelings. If the clergy had not assumed the keys of heaven and hell ; if they had not appeared legitimately to possess the power of pronouncing the eternal destiny of man, of suspending or excommunicating from those Christian privileges which were

inseparably connected in Christian belief with the eternal sentence, or of absolving and re-admitting into the pale of the Church and of salvation, — among the mass of believers, the uncertainty, the terror, the agony of minds fully impressed with the conviction of their immortality, and yearning by every means to obtain the assurance of pardon and peace, with heaven and hell constantly before their eyes, and agitating their inmost being, would have been almost insupportable. However the clergy might exaggerate their powers, they could not extend them beyond the ready acquiescence of the people. They could not possess the power of absolving without that of condemning; and men were content to brave the terrors of the gloomier award, for the indescribable consolations of confidence in their brighter and more ennobling promises.

The change in the relative position of Christianity to the rest of the world tended to the advancement of the hierarchy. At first there was no necessity to guard the admission into the society with rigid or suspicious jealousy, since the profession of Christianity in the face of a hostile world was in itself almost a sufficient test of sincerity. Expulsion from the society, or a temporary exclusion from its privileges, which afterwards grew into the awful forms of interdict or excommunication, must have been extremely rare or unnecessary,¹ since he who could not endure the

¹ The case in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. v. 5), which seems to have been the first of forcible expulsion, was obviously an act of *apostolic* authority. This, it is probable, was a Jewish convert, and these persons stood in a peculiar position: they would be ashamed, or would not be permitted, to return into the bosom of the Jewish community, which they had abandoned, and, if expelled from the Christian Church, would be complete outcasts. Not so the Heathen apostate, who might one day leave, and the next return to his old religion with all its advantages.

discipline, or who doubted again the doctrines of Christianity, had nothing to do but to abandon a despised sect, and revert to the freedom of the world. The older and more numerous the community, severer regulations were requisite for the admission of members, the maintenance of order, of unity in doctrine, and propriety of conduct, as well as for the ejection of unworthy disciples. Men began to be Christians, not from personal conviction, but from hereditary descent, as children of Christian parents. The Church was filled with doubtful converts, some from the love of novelty, others, when they incurred less danger and obloquy, from less sincere faith; some, no doubt, of the base and profligate, from the desire of partaking in the well-known charity of the Christians to their poorer brethren. Many became Christians, having just strength of mind enough to embrace its tenets, but not to act up to its duties. A more severe investigation, therefore, became necessary for admission into the society, a more summary authority for the expulsion of improper members.¹ These powers naturally devolved on the heads of the community, who had either originally possessed, and transmitted by regularly appointed descent, or held by general consent, the exclusive administration of the religious rites, the sacraments, which were the federal bonds of the

¹ It is curious to find that both ecclesiastical and civil laws against apostasy were constantly necessary. The Council of Elvira re-admits an apostate to communion, who has not worshipped idols, after ten years' penance. The laws of Gratian and Theodosius, and even of Arcadius and Valentinian III., speak a more menacing language: the Christian who has become a Pagan forfeits the right of bequeathing by will; his will is null and void. — Cod. Theod. xvi. 7, 1, 22. A law of Valentinian II. inflicts the same penalty (only with some limitation) on apostates to Judaism or Manicheism. The laws of Arcadius and Valentinian III. prove, by the severity of their prohibitions, not only that cases of apostasy took place, but that sacrifices were still frequently offered. — Cod. Theodos. xvi. tit. de Apostatis.

community. Their strictly civil functions became likewise more extensive and important. All legal disputes had, from the first, been submitted to the religious magistracy, not as interpreters of the laws of the empire, but as best acquainted with the higher principles of natural justice and Christian equity. The religious heads of the communities were the supreme and universally recognized arbiters in all the transactions of life. When the magistrate became likewise a Christian, and the two communities were blended into one, considerable difficulty could not but arise, as we shall hereafter see, in the limits of their respective jurisdictions.

Increase in
their civil
influence.

But the magisterial or ruling part of the ecclesiastical function became thus more and more relatively important; government gradually became an affair of asserted superiority on one hand, of exacted submission on the other; but still the general voice would long be in favor of the constituted authorities. The episcopal power would be a mild, a constitutional, an unoppressive, and therefore unquestioned and unlimited sovereignty; for, in truth, in the earlier period, what was the bishop, and in a subordinate degree, the presbyter, or even the deacon? He was the religious superior, elected by general acclamation, or at least, by general consent, as commanding that station by his unrivalled religious qualifications; he was solemnly invested in his office by a religious ceremony; he was the supreme arbiter in such civil matters as occurred among the members of the body, and thus the conservator of peace; he was the censor of morals, the minister in holy rites, the instructor in the doctrines of the faith, the adviser in all scruples, the consoler in all sorrows; he was the champion of the truth:

in the hour of trial, the first victim of persecution, the designated martyr. Of a being so sanctified, The bishop in the early community. so ennobled to the thought, what jealous suspicion would arise, what power would be withholden from one whose commission would seem ratified by the Holy Spirit of God? Power might generate ambition, distinction might be attended by pride; but the transition would not be perceived by the dazzled sight of respect, of reverence, of veneration, and of love.

Above all, diversities of religious opinion would tend to increase the influence and the power of those who held the religious supremacy. Dissensions in the Church cause of increase of sacerdotal power. It has been said, not without some authority, that the establishment of episcopacy in the apostolic times arose for the control of the differences with the Judaizing converts.¹ The multitude of believers would take refuge under authority from the doubts and perplexities thus cast among them; they would be grateful to men who would think for them, and in whom their confidence might seem to be justified by their station; a formulary of faith for such persons would be the most acceptable boon to the Christian society. This would be more particularly the case when, as in the Asiatic communities, these were not merely slight and unimportant, but vital points of difference. The Gnosticism, which the bishops of Asia Minor and of Syria had to combat, was not a Christian sect or heresy, but another religion, although speaking in some degree Christian language. The justifiable alarm of these dangerous

¹ No doubt this kind of constant and of natural appeal to the supreme religious functionary must have materially tended to strengthen and confirm this power.

encroachments would induce the teachers and governors to assume a loftier and more dictatorial tone; those untainted by the new opinions would vindicate and applaud their acknowledged champions and defenders. Hence we account for the strong language in the Epistles of Ignatius, which appears to claim the extraordinary rank of actual representatives, not merely of the apostles, but of Christ himself, for the bishops, precisely in this character, as maintainers of the true Christian doctrine.¹ In the pseudo-Apostolic

¹ My own impression is decidedly in favor of the genuineness of these Epistles, — the shorter ones I mean, — which are vindicated by Pearson; nor do I suspect that these passages, which are too frequent, and too much in the style and spirit of the whole, are later interpolations. Certainly the fact of the existence of two different copies of these Epistles throws doubt on the genuineness of both; but I receive them partly from an historical argument, which I have suggested (vol. ii. p. 105), partly from internal evidence. Some of their expressions, — *e.g.*, “Be ye subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ” (ad Trall. c. 2); “Follow your bishop as Jesus Christ the Father, the presbytery as the apostles, reverence the deacons as the ordinance of God” (ad Smyrn. c. 8), — taken as detached sentences, and without regard to the figurative style and ardent manner of the writer, would seem so extraordinary a transition from the tone of the apostles, as to throw still further doubts on the authenticity, at least, of these sentences. But it may be observed, that, in these strong expressions, the object of the writer does not seem to be to raise the sacerdotal power, but rather to enforce Christian unity, with direct reference to these fatal differences of doctrine. In another passage, he says: “Be ye subject to the bishop and to each other (τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ καὶ ἀλλήλοις), as Jesus Christ to the Father, and the apostles to Christ, to the Father and to the Spirit.”

I cannot indeed understand the inference that all the language or tenets of Christians who may have heard the apostles are to be considered of apostolic authority. Ignatius was a vehement and strongly figurative writer, very different in his tone, according to my judgment, to the apostolic writings. His eager desire for martyrdom, his deprecating the interference of the Roman Christians in his behalf, is remarkably at variance with the sober dignity with which the apostles did not seek, but submitted to death. That which may have been high-wrought metaphor in Ignatius, is repeated by the author of the Apostolic Constitutions, without reserve or limitation. This, I think, may be fairly taken as indicative of the language prevalent at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, — ὑμῖν ὁ ἐπίσκοπος εἰς Θεὸν τετιμήσθω. The bishop is to be honored as God. — ii. 30. The language of Ps. lxxxi., “Ye are gods,” is applied to them: they are as much greater than

Constitutions, which belong probably to the latter end of the third century, this more than apostolic authority is sternly and unhesitatingly asserted.¹ Thus, the separation between the clergy and laity continually widened; the teacher or ruler of the community became the dictator of doctrine, the successor, not of the bishop appointed by apostolic authority,² or according to apostolic usage, but of the apostle; and at length took on himself a sacerdotal name and dignity. A strong corporate spirit, which arises out of associations formed for the noblest as well as for the most unworthy objects, could not but actuate the hierarchical college which was formed in each diocese or each city by the bishop and more or less numerous presbyters and deacons. The control on the autocracy of the bishop, which was exercised by this senate of presbyters, without whom he rarely acted, tended to strengthen, rather than to invalidate, the authority of the general body, in which all particular and adverse interests were absorbed in that of the clerical order.³

the king, as the soul is superior to the body, — *στέργειν ὀφείλετε ὡς πατέρα, — φοβέσθαι ὡς βασιλέα.* — 1st edit.

The question of the genuineness and authority of the Ignatian Epistles has been placed in an entirely new light, or perhaps has been inwrapped in a more indistinct haze, by the valuable publication of the Syriac Ignatius by Dr. Cureton. With this should be read some of the answers, especially Dr. Hussey's, and Baron Bunsen's Dissertation. My conclusion is, that I should be unwilling to claim historical authority for any passage not contained in Dr. Cureton's Syriac reprint. There is enough in Dr. Cureton's copy to justify the text, which I leave unaltered, though some of the quotations are probably not genuine. (1863.)

¹ Οὗτος ὡμὴν ἐπίγειος Θεὸς μετὰ Θεοῦ. — lib. ii. c. 26.

² The full apostolic authority was claimed for the bishops, I think, first distinctly, at a later period. See the letter from Firmilianus in Cyprian's works, Epist. lxxv. "Potestas peccatorum remittendorum apostolis data est . . . et episcopis qui eis vicariâ ordinatione successerunt."

³ Even Cyprian enforces his own authority by that of his concurrent college of presbyters: "Quando à primordio episcopatus mei statuerem, nihil sine consilio vestro, et cum consensu plebis, meâ privatim sententiâ gerere."

The language of the Old Testament, which was received perhaps with greater readiness, from the contemptuous aversion in which it was held by the Gnostics, on this as on other subjects, gradually found its way into the Church.¹ But the strong and marked line between the ministerial or magisterial order (the clergy) and the inferior Christians, the people (the laity), had been drawn, before the bishop became a pontiff (for the Heathen names were likewise used), the presbyters the sacerdotal order, and the deacons, a class of men who shared in the indelible sanctity of the new priesthood. The common priesthood of all Christians, as distinguishing them by their innocent and dedicated character from the profane Heathen, asserted in the Epistle of St. Peter, was the only notion of the sacerdotal character at first admitted into the popular sentiment.² The appellation of the sacerdotal order began to be metaphorically applied to the Christian clergy,³ but soon became real titles; and by the close of the third century, they were invested in the names and claimed the rights of the Levitical priesthood in the Jewish theocracy.⁴ The Epistle of Cyprian to

Language
of the Old
Testament.

Clergy and
laity.

— Epist. v. In other passages, he says, “Cui rei non potui me solum iudicem dare.” He had acted, therefore, “cum collegis meis, et cum plebe ipsâ universâ.” — Epist. xxviii.

¹ It is universally adopted in the Apostolic Constitutions. The crime of Korah is significantly adduced; tithes are mentioned, I believe, for the first time, ii. 25. Compare vi. 2.

² See the well-known passage of Tertullian: “Nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus? . . . Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesiæ auctoritas.” Tertullian evidently Montanizes in this treatise, *De Exhort. Castit.* c. 7, yet seems to deliver these as maxims generally acknowledged.

³ We find the first appearance of this in the figurative Ignatius. Tertullian uses the term “summi Sacerdotes.”

⁴ The passage in the Epistle of Clemens (ad Roman. c. 40), in which the analogy of the ministerial offices of the church with the priestly functions of

Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, shows the height to which the episcopal power had aspired before the religion of Christ had become that of the Roman empire. The passages of the Old Testament, and even of the New, in which honor or deference are paid to the Hebrew pontificate, are recited in profuse detail; implicit obedience is demanded for the priest of God, who is the sole infallible judge or delegate of Christ.¹

Even if it had been possible that, in their state of high-wrought attachment and reverence for the teachers and guardians of their religion, any mistrust could have arisen in the more sagacious and far-sighted minds of the vast system of sacerdotal domination, of which they were thus laying the deep foundations in the Roman world, there was no recollection or tradition of any priestly tyranny from which they could take warning or imbibe caution. These sacerdotal castes were obsolete or Oriental; the only one within their sphere of knowledge was that of the Magians in the hostile kingdom of Persia. In Greece, the priesthood had sunk into the neglected ministers of the deserted temples; their highest dignity was to preside over the amusements of the people. The emperor had now at length disdainfully cast off the supreme pontificate of the Heathen world, which had long been a title, and nothing more. Even among the

the Jewish temple is distinctly developed, is rejected as an interpolation by all judicious and impartial scholars.

¹ See his sixty-eighth Epistle, in which he draws the analogy between the legitimate bishop and the sacerdos of the law, the irregularly elected and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram: "*Neque enim aliunde hæreses obortæ sunt, aut nata sunt schismata, quam inde quod sacerdoti Dei non obtemperatur, nec unus in ecclesia ad tempus sacerdos, et ad tempus Judex, vice Christi cogitatur: cui si secundum magisteria divina obtemperaret fraternitas universa, nemo adversum sacerdotum collegium quicquam moveret.*"—Ad Cornel., Epist. 1v.

Jews, the rabbinical hierarchy, which had gained considerable strength, even during our Saviour's time, but after the fall of the Temple, and the publication of the Talmuds, had assumed a complete despotism over the Jewish mind, was not a priesthood. The Rabbins came promiscuously from all the tribes: their claims rested on learning and on knowledge of the traditions of the Fathers, not on Levitical descent.

Nor, indeed, could any danger be apparent, so long as the free voice of the community, guided by fervent piety and rarely perverted by less worthy motives, summoned the wisest and the holiest to these important functions. The nomination to the sacred office experienced the same, more gradual, perhaps, but not less inevitable, change from the popular to the self-electing form. The acclamation of the united, and seldom, if ever, discordant voices of the presbyters and the people, might be trusted with the appointment to the headship of a poor and devout community, whose utmost desire was to worship God, and to fulfil their Christian duties in uninterrupted obscurity. But, as the episcopate became an object of ambition or interest, the disturbing forces which operate on the justice and wisdom of popular elections could not but be called forth; and slowly the clergy, by example, by influence, by recommendation, by dictation, by usurpation, identified their acknowledged right of consecration for a particular office with that of appointment to it. This was one of their last triumphs. In the days of Cyprian, and towards the close of the third century, the people had the right of electing, or at least of rejecting, candidates for the priesthood.¹ In the latter half of the fourth century,

Change in
the mode
of election.

¹ "Plebs ipsa maximè habeat potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes

the streets of Rome ran with blood in the contest of Damasus and Ursicinus for the bishopric of Rome; both factions arrayed against each other the priests and the people who were their respective partisans.¹ Thus the clergy had become a distinct and recognized class in society, consecrated by a solemn ceremony, the imposition of hands, which, however, does not yet seem to have been indelible.² But each church was still a separate and independent community; the bishop as its sovereign, the presbyters, and sometimes the deacons, as a kind of religious senate, conducted all its internal concerns. Great deference was paid from the first to the bishops of the more important sees: the number and wealth of the congregations would give them weight and dignity; and, in general, those prelates would be men of the highest character and attainments. Yet promotion to a wealthier or more distinguished see was looked upon as betraying worldly ambition. The enemies of Eusebius, the Arian or Semi-Arian Bishop of Constantinople, bitterly taunted him with his elevation from the less important see of Nicomedia to the episcopate of the Eastern metropolis. This translation was prohibited by some councils.³

vel indignos recusandi." — Epist. lxvii. Cornelius was "*testimonio cleri, ac suffragio populi electus.*" Compare Apostol. Constit. viii. 4. The Council of Laodicea (at the beginning of the fourth century) ordains that bishops are to be appointed by the metropolitans, and that the multitude, *οἱ ὄχλοι*, are not to designate persons for the priesthood.

¹ Ammianus Marcell. xxvii. 3; Hierom. in Chron. Compare Gibbon, vol. iv. 259.

² A canon of the Council of Chalcedon (can. 7) prohibits the return of a spiritual person to the laity, and his assumption of lay-offices in the state. See also Conc. Turon. i. c. 5. The laws of Justinian confiscate to the Church the property of any priest who has forsaken his orders. — Cod. Just. i. tit. iii. 53; Nov. v. 4, 125, c. 15. This seems to imply that the practice was not uncommon, even at that late period. Compare Planck, vol. i. 399.

³ Synod. Nic. can. 15; Conc. Sard. c. 2; Conc. Arel. 21.

The level of ecclesiastical or episcopal dignity gradually broke up; some bishops emerged into a higher rank; the single community over which the bishop originally presided grew into the aggregation of several communities, and formed a diocese; the metropolitan rose above the ordinary bishop, the patriarch assumed a rank above the metropolitan, till at length, in the regularly graduated scale, the primacy of Rome was asserted, and submitted to by the humble and obsequious West.

The diocese grew up in two ways: 1. In the larger cities, the rapid increase of the Christians led necessarily to the formation of separate congregations, which, to a certain extent, required each its proper organization, yet invariably remained subordinate to the single bishop. In Rome, towards the beginning of the fourth century, there were above forty churches, rendering allegiance to the prelate of the metropolis.

2. Christianity was first established in the towns and cities, and from each centre diffused itself with more or less success into the adjacent country. In some of these country congregations, bishops appear to have been established, yet these chorepiscopi, or rural bishops, maintained some subordination to the head of the mother church;¹ or, where the converts were fewer, the rural Christians remained members of the mother church in the city.² In Africa, from the immense number of bishops, each community seems to have had its own superior;

¹ See in Bingham, Ant. b. ii. c. 14, the controversy about the chorepiscopi, or rural bishops.

² Justin Martyr speaks of the country converts: παντῶν κατὰ πόλεις ἡ ἑγγρὸς μενόντων, ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συνέλευσις γίνεται. — Apolog. i. 67.

but this was peculiar to the province. In general, the churches adjacent to the towns or cities, either originally were, or became, the diocese of the city bishop; for, as soon as Christianity became the religion of the state, the powers of the rural bishops were restricted, and the office at length was either abolished or fell into disuse.¹

The rank of the metropolitan bishop, who presided over a certain number of inferior bishops, and the convocation of ecclesiastical or episcopal synods, grew up apparently at the same time and from the same causes. The earliest authentic synods seem to have arisen out of the disputes about the time of observing Easter;² but before the middle of the third century, these occasional and extraordinary meetings of the clergy in certain districts took the form of provincial synods. These began in the Grecian provinces,³ but extended throughout the Christian world. In some cases they seem to have been assemblies of bishops alone; in others, of the whole clergy. They met once or twice in the year; they were summoned by the metropolitan bishop, who presided in the meeting, and derived from, or confirmed his metropolitan dignity by this presidency.⁴

As the metropolitans rose above the bishops, so the archbishops, or patriarchs, rose above the metropolitans. These ecclesiastical dignities seem to have been formed according to the civil divis-

Archbishops
and patri-
archs.

¹ Concil. Antioch. can. 10; Concil. Ancyra. c. 13; Conc. Laod. c. 57.

² See the list of earlier synods chiefly on this subject, Labbe, *Concilia*, vol. i. pp. 595, 650, edit. Paris, 1671.

³ See the remarkable passage in Tertullian de Jejunio, with the ingenious commentary of Mosheim, *De Reb. Christ. ante Const. M.* pp. 264, 268.

⁴ "Necessario apud nos fit, ut per singulos annos seniores et præpositi in unum conveniamus, ad disponenda ea, quæ curæ nostræ commissa sunt" Firm. ad Cyprian. Ep. 75.

ions of the empire.¹ The Patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome, and, by a formal decree of the Council of Chalcedon, Constantinople, assumed even a higher dignity. They asserted the right, in some cases, of appointing, in others of deposing, even metropolitan bishops.²

While Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople contested the supremacy of the East, the two former as more ancient and apostolic churches, the latter as the imperial city, Rome stood alone, as in every respect the most eminent church in the West. While other churches might boast their foundation by a single apostle (and those churches were always held in peculiar respect), Rome asserted that she had been founded by, and preserved the ashes of, two, and those the most distinguished of the apostolic body. Before the end of the third century, the lineal descent of her bishops from St. Peter was unhesitatingly claimed, and obsequiously admitted by the Christian world.³ The name of Rome was still imposing and majestic, particularly in the West; the wealth of the Roman bishop probably surpassed that of other pre-

Rome.

¹ Bingham names thirteen or fourteen patriarchs, — Alexandria, Antioch, Cæsarea, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Constantinople, Thessalonica, Sirmium, Rome, Carthage, Milan, Lyons, Toledo, York. But their respective claims do not appear to have been equally recognized, or at the same period.

² Chrysostom deposed Gerontius, metropolitan of Nicomedia. Sozomen, viii. 6.

³ The passage of Irenæus (lib. ii. c. 3), as is well known, is the first distinct assertion of any primacy in Peter, and derived from him to the see of Rome. This passage would be better authority, if it existed in the original language, not in an indifferent translation; if it were the language of an Eastern, not a Western, prelate, who might acknowledge a supremacy in Rome, which would not have been admitted by the older Asiatic sees; still, more, if it did not assert, what is manifestly untrue, the *foundation* of the Church of Rome by St. Peter and St. Paul; and, finally, if Irenæus could be conclusive authority on such a subject. Planck justly observes, that the *potior principalitas* of the city of Rome was the primary reason why a *potior principalitas* was recognized in the see of Rome.

lates; for Rome was still the place of general concourse and resort; and the pious strangers who visited the capital would not withhold their oblations to the metropolitan church. Within the city, he presided over above forty churches, besides the suburbicarian districts. The whole clerical establishment at Rome amounted to forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolyths, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers. It comprehended fifteen hundred widows and poor brethren, with a countless multitude of the higher orders and of the people. No wonder that the name, the importance, the wealth, the accredited apostolic foundation, of Rome, arrayed her in pre-eminent dignity. Still, in his correspondence with the Bishop of Rome, the general tone of Cyprian, the great advocate of Christian unity, is that of an equal; though he shows great respect to the Church of Rome, it is to the faithful guardian of an uninterrupted tradition, not as invested with superior authority.¹

As the hierarchical pyramid tended to a point, its base spread out into greater width. The greater pomp of the services, the more intricate administration of affairs, the greater variety of regulations required by

¹ While I deliver my own conclusions, without fear or compromise, I would avoid all controversy on this as well as on other subjects. It is but right, therefore, for me to give the two apparently conflicting passages in Cyprian on the primacy of St. Peter: "*Nam nec Petrus quem primum Dominus elegit, et super quem ædificavit Ecclesiam suam . . . vindicavit sibi aliquid insolenter aut arroganter assumpsit, ut diceret se primatum tenere, et obtemperari à novellis et posteris sibi potius oportere.*" — *Epist. lxxi.* "*Hoc erant utique cæteri Apostoli, quod fuit Petrus, pari consortio præditi et honoris et potestatis; sed exordium ab unitate profisciscitur, et primatus Petro datur, ut una Christi ecclesia, et cathedra una monstretur.*" — *De Unit. Eccles.* But this last passage is of more than doubtful authenticity; it is, no doubt, spurious. On the whole of this I have enlarged in the history of Latin Christianity.

the increasing and now strictly separated classes of votaries, imposed the necessity for new functionaries, besides the bishops, priests, and deacons. These were the archdeacon and the five subordinate officiating ministers, who received a kind of ordination. 1. The sub-deacon, who, in the Eastern church, collected the alms of the laity and laid them upon the altar, and, in the Western, acted as a messenger, or bearer of despatches. 2. The reader, who had the custody of the sacred books, and, as the name implies, read them during the service. 3. The acolyth, who was an attendant on the bishop, carried the lamp before him, or bore the Eucharist to the sick. 4. The exorcist, who read the solemn forms over those possessed by demons, the energoumenoi, and sometimes at baptisms. 5. The ostiarius, or doorkeeper, who assigned his proper place in the church to each member, and guarded against the intrusion of improper persons.

New sacred
offices.

As Christianity assumed a more manifest civil existence, the closer correspondence, the more intimate sympathy, between its remote and scattered members, became indispensable to its strength and consistency. Its uniformity of development in all parts of the world arose out of, and tended to promote, this unity. It led to that concentration of the governing power in a few, which terminated at length in the West in the unrestricted power of one.

The internal unity of the Church, or universally disseminated body of Christians, had been maintained by the general similarity of doctrine, of sentiment, of its first simple usages and institutions, and the common dangers which it had endured in all parts of the world. It possessed its consociating principles in the occa-

sional correspondence between its remote members, in those recommendatory letters with which the Christian who travelled was furnished to his brethren in other parts of the empire; above all, in the common literature, which, including the sacred writings, seems to have spread with more or less regularity through the various communities. Nothing, however, tended so much, although they might appear to exacerbate and perpetuate diversities of opinion, to the maintenance of this unity, as the assemblage and recognition of general councils as the representatives of universal Christendom.¹ The bold impersonation,

Unity in
the Church.

¹ The earliest councils (not Œcumenic) were those of Rome (first and second) and the seven held at Carthage, concerning the lapsi, the schism of Novatianus, and the rebaptizing of heretics. The seventh in Routh, *Reliquiæ Sacræ* (Labbe, *Concilia III.*), is the first of which we have any thing like a report; and from this time, either from the canons which they issue, or the opinions delivered by the bishops, the councils prove important authorities, not merely for the decrees of the Church, but for the dominant tone of sentiment, and even of manners. Abhorrence of heresy is the prevailing feeling in this council, which decided the validity of heretical baptism. "Christ," says one bishop, "founded the Church; the Devil, heresy. How can the synagogue of Satan administer the baptism of the Church?" Another subjoins, "He who yields or betrays the baptism of the Church to heretics, what is he but a Judas of the spouse of Christ?" The Synod or Council of Antioch (A.D. 269) condemned Paul of Samosata. The Council of Illiberis (Elvira, or Granada), A.D. 303, affords some curious notices of the state of Christianity in that remote province. Some of the Heathen flames appear to have attempted to reconcile the performances of some of their religious duties, at least their presiding at the games, with Christianity. There are many moral regulations which do not give a high idea of Spanish virtue. The bishops and clergy were not to be itinerant traders; they might trade within the province (can. xviii.), but were on no account to take upon usury. The Jews were settled in great numbers in Spain (compare *Hist. of the Jews*): the taking food with them is interdicted, as also to permit them to reap the harvest. Gambling is forbidden. The Councils of Rome and of Arles were held to settle the Donatist controversy; but of the latter there are twenty-two canons, chiefly of ecclesiastical regulations. The Council of Ancyra (A.D. 358) principally relates to the conduct of persons during the time of persecution. The Council of Laodicea (A.D. 368) has some curious general canons. The first Œcumenic council was that of Nicæa. See book iii. c. iv. It was followed by the long succession of Arian and anti-Arian councils, at

the Church, seemed now to assume a more imposing visible existence. Its vital principle was no longer that unseen and hidden harmony which had united the Christians in all parts of the world with their Saviour and with each other. By the assistance of the orthodox emperors, and the commanding abilities of its great defenders, one dominant form of doctrine had obtained the ascendancy; Gnosticism, Donatism, Arianism, Manicheism, had been thrown aside; and the Church stood, as it were, individualized, or idealized, by the side of the other social impersonation, the state. The emperor was the sole ruler of the latter, and at this period the aristocracy of the superior clergy, at a later the autocracy of the pope, at least as the representative of the Western Church, became the supreme authority of the former. The hierarchical power, from exemplary, persuasive, amiable, was now authoritative, commanding, awful. When Christianity became the most powerful religion, when it became the religion of the many, of the emperor, of the state, the convert or the hereditary Christian had no strong Pagan party to receive him back into its bosom when outcast from the Church. If he ceased to believe, he no longer dared cease to obey. No course remained but prostrate submission, or the endurance of any penitential duty which might be enforced upon him; and on the penitential system, and the power of excommunication, to which we shall

Tyre, Antioch, Rome, Milan, Sardica, Rimini, &c. The Arian Council of Antioch is very strict in its regulations for the residence of the bishops and the clergy, and their restriction of their labors to their own diocese or cures (A.D. 341).—Apud Labbe, vol. ii. 559. The first of Constantinople was the second Œcumenic council (A.D. 381). It re-established Trinitarianism as the doctrine of the East; it elevated the bishopric of Constantinople into a patriarchate, to rank after Rome. The two other Œcumenic councils are beyond the bounds of the present history.

revert, rested the unshaken hierarchical authority over the human soul.

With the power of the clergy increased both those other sources of influence, pomp and wealth. Increase in pomp. Distinctions in station and in authority naturally lead to distinctions in manners, and those adventitious circumstances of dress and habits, which designate different ranks. Confederating upon equal terms, the superior authorities in the Church began to assume an equal rank with those of the state. In the Christian city, the bishop became a personage of the highest importance; and the clergy, as a kind of subordinate religious magistracy, claimed, if a different kind, yet an equal share of reverence, with the civil authority. Where the civil magistrate had his insignia of office, the natural respect of the people, and the desire of maintaining his official dignity, would invest the religious functionary likewise with some peculiar symbol of his character. With their increased rank and estimation, the clergy could not but assume a more imposing demeanor; and the majesty in which they were arrayed during the public ceremonial could not be entirely thrown off when they returned to ordinary life. The reverence of man exacts dignity from those who are its objects. The primitive apostolic meanness of appearance and habit was altogether unsuited to their altered position, as equal in rank, more than equal in real influence and public veneration, to the civil officers of the empire or municipality. The consciousness of power will affect the best-disciplined minds, and the unavoidable knowledge that salutary authority is maintained over a large mass of mankind by imposing manners, dress, and mode of living, would reconcile many to that

which otherwise might appear incongruous to their sacred character. There was, in fact, and always has been, among the more pious clergy, a perpetual conflict between a conscientious sense of the importance of external dignity, and a desire, as conscientious, of retaining something of outward humility. The monkish and ascetic waged implacable war against that secular distinction which, if in some cases eagerly assumed by pride and ambition, was forced upon others by the deference, the admiration, the trembling subservience of mankind. The prelate who looked the most imperious, and spoke most sternly, on his throne, fasted and underwent the most humiliating privations in his chamber or his cell. Some prelates supposed, that as ambassadors of the Most High, as supreme governors in that which was of greater dignity than the secular empire, the earthly kingdom of Christ, they ought to array themselves in something of imposing dignity. The bishops of Rome early affected state and magnificence. Chrysostom, on the other hand, in Constantinople, differing from his predecessors, considered poverty of dress, humility of demeanor, and the most severe austerity of life, as more becoming a Christian prelate, who was to set the example of the virtues which he inculcated, and to show contempt for those worldly distinctions which properly belonged to the civil power. Others, among whom was Ambrose of Milan, while in their own persons and in private they were the plainest, simplest, and most austere of men, nevertheless threw into the service of the Church all that was solemn and magnificent; and, as officiating functionaries, put on for the time the majesty of manner, the state of attendance, the splendor of attire, which seemed to be authorized

by the gorgeousness of dress and ceremonial pomp in the Old Testament.¹

With the greater reverence, indeed, peculiar sanctity was exacted, and no doubt, in general, observed by the clergy. They were imperatively required to surpass the general body of Christians in purity of morals, and, perhaps even more, in all religious performances. As the outward ceremonial, fasting, public prayer during almost every part of the day, and the rest of the ritual service, were more completely incorporated with Christianity, they were expected to maintain the public devotion by their example, and to encourage self-denial by their more rigid austerity.

Wealth as well as pomp followed in the train of power. The desire to command wealth (we must not yet use the ignoble term "covetousness") not merely stole imperceptibly into intimate connection with religion, but appeared almost a part of religion itself. The individual was content to be disinterested in his own person; the interest which he

Wealth of
the clergy.

¹ The clergy were long without any distinction of dress, except on ceremonial occasions. At the end of the fourth century, it was the custom for them in some churches to wear black. — Socr., H. E. vi. 22. Jerome, however, recommends that they should neither be distinguished by too bright nor too sombre colors. — Ad Nepot. The proper habits were probably introduced at the end of the fifth century, as they are recognized by councils in the sixth. — Conc. Matic. A.D. 581; can. l. 5; Trull. c. 27. The tonsure began in the fourth century. "Prima del iv. secolo i semplici preti non avevano alcun abito distinto dagli altri o Pagani o Christiani, se non in quanto la professata loro umiltà faceva una certa pompa di abiezione e di povertà." — Cicognara, Storia di Scultura, t. i. p. 27. Count Cicognara gives a curious account of the date and origin of the different parts of the clerical dress. The mitre is of the eighth century; the tiara, of the tenth.

The fourth Council of Carthage (A.D. 398) has some restrictions on dress. The clericus was not to wear long hair or beard ("nec comam habeat nec barbam." — Can. xlv.). he was to approve his profession by his dress and walk, and not to study the beauty of his dress or sandals. He might obtain his sustenance by working as an artisan; or in agriculture, provided he did not neglect his duty. — Can. li., lii.

felt in the opulence of the Church, or even of his own order, appeared not merely excusable, but a sacred duty. In the hands of the Christian clergy, wealth, which seemed at that period to be lavished on the basest of mankind, and squandered on the most criminal and ignominious objects, might seem to be hallowed to the noblest purposes. It enabled Christianity to vie with Paganism in erecting splendid edifices for the worship of God, to provide an imposing ceremonial, lamps for midnight service, silver or golden vessels for the altar, veils, hangings, and priestly dresses; it provided for the wants of the poor, whom misgovernment, war, and taxation, independent of the ordinary calamities of human life, were grinding to the earth. To each church were attached numbers of widows and other destitute persons; the redemption of slaves was an object on which the riches of the Church were freely lavished: the sick in the hospitals and prisons, and destitute strangers, were under their especial care. “How many captives has the wealth of the Pagan establishment released from bondage?” This is among the triumphant questions of the advocates of Christianity.¹ The maintenance of children exposed by their parents, and taken up and educated by the Christians, was another source of generous expenditure. When, then, at first the munificence of the emperor, and afterwards the gratitude and superstitious fears of the people, heaped up their costly offerings at the feet of the clergy, it would have appeared, not merely ingratitude and folly, but impiety and uncharitableness to their brethren, to have rejected them. The clergy, as soon as they were set apart from the ordinary business of life, were main

Uses to
which it
was applied.

¹ Ambros. contra Symmachum.

tained by the voluntary offerings of their brethren. The piety which embraced Christianity never failed in liberality. The payments seem chiefly to have been made in kind rather than in money; though on extraordinary occasions large sums were raised for some sacred or charitable object. One of the earliest acts of Constantine was to make munificent grants to the despoiled and destitute Church.¹ A certain portion of the public stores of corn and other produce, which was received in kind by the officers of the revenue, was assigned to the Church and clergy.² This was withdrawn by Julian, and, when regranted by the Christian emperors, was diminished one-third.

The law of Constantine which empowered the clergy of the Church to receive testamentary bequests, and to hold land, was a gift which would scarcely have been exceeded if he had granted them two provinces of the empire.³

It became almost a sin to die without some bequest to pious uses; and before a century had elapsed, the mass of property which had passed over to the Church was so enormous, that the most pious of the emperors were obliged to issue a restrictive law, which the most ardent of the Fathers were constrained to approve.

Jerome acknowledges, with the bitterness of shame, the necessity of this check on ecclesiastical avarice.⁴ "I complain not of the law, but

Law of Constantine empowering the Church to receive bequests.

Restrictive edict of Valentinian.

¹ Euseb., H. E. x. 6.

² Sozomen, H. E. v. 5.

³ This is the observation of Planck.

⁴ Valentinian II. de Episc. "Solis clericis et monachis hac lege prohibetur, et prohibetur non à persecutoribus sed à principibus Christianis; nec de lege conqueror, sed doleo cur meruerimus hanc legem." — Hieronym. ad Nepot. He speaks also of the "provida severaque legis cautio, et tamen non sic refrænatur avaritia." Ambrose (l. ii. adv. Symm.) admits the necessity of the law. Augustine, while he loftily disclaims all participation in such abuses, acknowledges their frequency. "Quicunque vult, exhæredato filio

that we have deserved such a law." The ascetic father and the Pagan historian describe the pomp and avarice of the Roman clergy in the fourth century. Ammianus, while he describes the sanguinary feud which took place for the prelacy between Damasus and Ursicinus, intimates that the magnificence of the prize may account for the obstinacy and ferocity with which it was contested. He dwells on the prodigal offerings of the Roman matrons to their bishop; his pomp, when, in elaborate and elegant attire, he was borne in his chariot through the admiring streets; the costly luxury of his almost imperial banquets. But the just historian contrasts this pride and luxury of the Roman pontiff with the more temperate life and dignified humility of the provincial bishops.¹ Jerome goes on sternly to charge the whole Roman clergy with the old vice of the Heathen aristocracy, *hæredipety* or legacy-hunting, and asserts that they used the holy and venerable name of the Church to extort for their own personal emolument, the wealth of timid or expiring devotees. The law of Valentinian justly withheld from the clergy and the monks alone that privilege of receiving bequests which was permitted to the "lowest of mankind, Heathen priests, actors, charioteers and harlots."

Pope Damasus.

Large parts of the ecclesiastical revenues, however, arose from more honorable sources. Some of the estates of the Heathen temples, though in general confiscated to the imperial treasury, were alienated to the Christian churches. The Church of Alexandria obtained the revenue of the Temple of Serapis.²

hæredem facere ecclesiam, quærat alterum qui suscipiat, non Augustinum, immo, Deo propitio, inveniatur neminem." — Serm. 49.

¹ Amm. Marcellinus, xxvii. 3.

² Sozomen, v. 7. The Church of Antioch possessed lands, houses, rents,

These various estates and properties belonged to the Church in its corporate capacity, not to the clergy.

Application
of the wealth
of the
Church.

They were charged with the maintenance of the fabric of the Church, and the various charitable purposes, including the sustenance of their own dependent poor. Strong enactments were made to prevent their alienation from those hallowed purposes,¹ the clergy were even restrained from bequeathing by will what they had obtained from the property of the Church. The estates of the Church were liable to the ordinary taxes, the land and capitation tax, but exempt from what were called sordid and extraordinary charges, and from the quartering of troops.²

The bishops gradually obtained almost the exclusive management of this property. In some churches, a steward (*œconomus*) presided over this department, but he would in general, be virtually under the control of the bishop. In most churches, the triple division began to be observed; one-third of the revenue to the bishop, one to the clergy, the other to the fabric and the poor; the Church of Rome added a fourth, a separate portion for the fabric.³

carriages, mules, and other kinds of property. It undertook the daily sustenance of three thousand widows and virgins, besides prisoners, the sick in the hospitals, the maimed, and the diseased, who sat down, as it were before the Christian altar, and received food and raiment, besides many other accidental claims on their benevolence. — Chrysostom, *Oper.* Montfaucon, in his dissertation, gives the references.

¹ Conc. Carth. iii. 40; Antioch, 24. Constit. Apost. 40. Cod. Theodos. de Episc. et Clericis, t. 33.

² Planck, P. iii. c. vi., iii.

³ By a law of Theodosius and Valent. A.D. 434, the property of any bishop, presbyter, deacon, deaconess, sub-deacon, &c., or of any monk, who died intestate, and without legal heirs, fell, not to the treasury, as in ordinary cases, but to the church or monastery to which he belonged. The same privilege was granted to the Corporation of Decurions. — Codex Theodos. v. iii. i.

The clergy had become a separate community; they had their own laws of internal government, their own special regulations, or recognized proprieties of life and conduct. Their social delinquencies were not as yet withdrawn from the civil jurisdiction; but, besides this, they were amenable to the severe judgments of ecclesiastical censure;¹ the lowest were liable to corporal chastisement. Flagellation, which was administered in the synagogue, and was so common in Roman society, was by no means so disgraceful as to exempt the persons at least of the inferior clergy from its infliction.² But the more serious punishment was degradation into the vulgar class of worshippers. To them it was the most fearful condemnation to be ejected from the inner sanctuary and thrust down from their elevated station.³

As yet the clergy were not entirely estranged from society; they had not become a caste by the legal enforcement or general practice of ce-
Celibacy of
the clergy.libacy. Clement of Alexandria asserts and vindicates the marriage of some of the apostles.⁴ The discreet

¹ Sozomen states that Constantine gave his clergy the privilege of rejecting the jurisdiction of the civil tribunal, and bringing their causes to the bishop. — H. E. i. 9. But these were probably disputes between clergyman and clergyman. All others were cases of arbitration, by mutual agreement; but the civil power was to ratify their decree. In a Novella of Valentinian II., A.D. 452, it is expressly said, “Quoniam constat episcopos et presbyteros forum legibus non habere . . . nec de aliis causis præter religionem posse cognoscere.” Compare Planck, p. 300. The clericus was bound to appear, if summoned by a layman, before the ordinary judge. Justinian made the change, and that only in a limited manner.

² Bishops were accustomed to order flagellations. “Qui modus coercionis, a magistris artium liberalium, et ab ipsis parentibus, et sæpe in iudiciis solet ab Episcopis adhiberi.” — Augustin. Epist. cxxxiii. High authority for the antiquity of flogging in public schools!

³ The decrees of the fourth council of Carthage show the strict morals and humble subordination demanded of the clergy at the close of the fourth century.

⁴ Ἡ καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων ἀποδοκιμάζουσι; Πέτρος μὲν γὰρ καὶ Φίλιπ.

remonstrance of the old Egyptian bishop perhaps prevented the Council of Nicæa from imposing that heavy burden on the reluctant clergy. The aged Paphnutius, himself unmarried, boldly asserted that the conjugal union was chastity.¹ But that which, in the third century, is asserted to be free to all mankind, clergy as well as laity, in Egypt;² in the fourth, according to Jerome, was prohibited or limited by vows of continence. It has been asserted,³ and without refutation, that there was no ecclesiastical law or regulation which compelled the celibacy of the clergy for the first three centuries. Clement of Alexandria, as we see, argues against enforced celibacy from the example of the Apostles. Married bishops and presbyters frequently occur in the history of Eusebius. The martyrdom of Numidicus was shared and not dishonored by the companionship of his wife.⁴ It was a sight of joy and consolation to the husband to see her perishing in the same flames. The wives of the clergy are recognized, not merely in the older writings, but also in the public documents of the Church.⁵ Council after council,

ποῦς ἐπαιδοποιήσαντο. Φίλιππος δὲ καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας ἀνδράσιν ἐξέδωκεν, καὶ ὅγε Παῦλος οὐκ ὀκνεῖ ἐν τινι ἐπιστολῇ τὴν αὐτοῦ προσαγορεύειν σύζυγον, ἣν οὐ περιεκόμιζεν διὰ τὸ τῆς ὑπηρεσίας εὐσταλέας. — Strom. i. iii. c. 6. On the question of the marriage of the apostles and their immediate followers, almost every thing is collected in a note of Cotelerius, *Patres Apostolici*, ii. 241.

¹ Gelasii *Histor. Conc. Nic.* c. xxxii. *Socrat.* i. 11. *Sozomen*, i. 23. Baronius insists upon this being *Greek fable*.

² Ναὶ μὴν καὶ τὸν τῆς μιᾶς γυναῖκος ἄνδρα παντὶ ἀποδέχεται κἂν πρεσβύτερος ἢ, κἂν διάκονος, κἂν λαϊκός, ἀνεπιλήπτως γάμῳ χρωμένος. Σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας. — Strom. iii. 12, 9.

³ By Bingham, book iv.

⁴ "Numidicus presbyter uxorem adhaerentem lateri suo, concrematam cum cæteris, vel conservatam potius dixerim, lætus aspexit." — Cyprian, p. 525. See in Basnage, *Dissertatio Septima*, a list of married prelates.

⁵ Conc. Gang. 2. 4; Conc. Ancy. c. 10. This law allows any *deacon* to marry.

in the East, introduced regulations, which, though intended to restrict, recognize the legality of these ties.¹ Highly as they exalt the angelic state of celibacy, neither Basil in the East, nor Augustine in the West, positively prohibits the marriage of the clergy.²

But in the fourth century, particularly in the latter half, the concurrent influence of the higher honors attributed to virginity by all the great Christian writers; of the hierarchical spirit, which, even at that time, saw how much of its corporate strength depended on this entire detachment from worldly ties; of the monastic system, which worked into the clerical, partly by the frequent selection of monks for ordination and for consecration to ecclesiastical dignities, partly by the emulation of the clergy, who could not safely allow themselves to be outdone in austerity by these rivals for popular estimation; all these various influences introduced restrictions and regulations on the marriage of the clergy, which darkened at length into the solemn ecclesiastical interdict. First, the general sentiment repudiated a second marriage as a monstrous act of incontinence, an infirmity or a sin which ought to prevent the Christian from ever aspiring to any ecclesiastical office.³ The next offence against

¹ In the West, the Council of Elvira commands the clergy to abstain from connubial intercourse and the procreation of children. — Can. xxxiii. This was frequently re-enacted. Among others, Conc. Carthag. v. 2; Labbe, ii. 1216.

² Basil speaks of a presbyter who had contumaciously contracted an unlawful marriage. — Can. ii. c. 27. On Augustine, compare Theiner, p. 154

³ Athenagoras laid down the general principle, ὁ γὰρ δεύτερος (γάμος) ἀνθρώπου ἐστὶ μοιχεία. — De Resurr. Carn. Compare Orig. contr. Cels. vii., and Hom. vi., in Num. xviii., in Luc. xviii., in Matt. Tertull. ad Uxor. 1-5. This was almost an universal moral axiom. Epiphanius said, that, since the coming of Christ, no digamous clergyman had ever been ordained. Barbeyrac has collected the passages of the Fathers expressive of their abhorrence

the general feeling was marriage with a widow; then followed the restriction of marriage after entering into holy orders: the married priest retained his wife, but to condescend to such carnal ties after ordination was revolting to the general sentiment, and was considered to imply a total want of feeling for the dignity of their high calling. Then was generally introduced a demand of abstinence from sexual connection from those who retained their wives: this was imperatively required from the higher orders of the clergy. It was considered to render unclean, and to disqualify even from prayer for the people, as the priest's life was to be a perpetual prayer.¹ Not that there was as yet any uniform practice. The bishops assembled at the Council of Gangra² condemned the followers of Eustathius, who refused to receive the sacraments from any but unmarried priests. The heresy of Jovinian, on the other hand, probably called forth the severe regulations of Pope Siricius.³ This sort of encyclical letter positively prohibited all clergy of the higher orders from any intercourse with their wives. A man who lived to the age of thirty, the husband of one wife, that wife, when married, a virgin, might be an acolyth

of second marriages. — *Morale des Pères*, pp. 1, 29, 34, 37, &c. The Council of Neo-Cæsarea forbade clergymen to be present at a feast for a second marriage: *πρεσβύτερον εἰς γάμους διγαμοῦντων μὴ ἐστῆσαι*. — Can. vii.

¹ Such is the distinct language of Jerome: "Si laicus et quicumque fidelis orare non potest nisi careat officio conjugali, sacerdoti, cui semper pro populo offerenda sunt sacrificia semper orandum est. Si semper orandum est, semper carendum matrimonio." — *Adv. Jovin.* p. 175.

² In the Council of Gangra (about 350), the preamble and the first canon do not appear to refer necessarily to the wives of the clergy. They anathematize certain teachers (the Eustathians) who had blamed marriage, and said that a faithful and pious woman who slept with her husband could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. A sacred virgin is prohibited from vaunting over a married woman. — Canon x. Women are forbidden to abandon their husbands and children.

³ The letter of Siricius in *Mansi Concil.* iii. 635, A.D. 385.

or sub-deacon ; after five years of strict continence, he might be promoted to a priest ; after ten years more of the same severe ordeal, a bishop. A clerk, any one in holy orders, even of the lowest degree, who married a widow or a second wife, was instantly deprived : no woman was to live in the house of a clerk.

The Council of Carthage, reciting the canon of a former council, commands the clergy to abstain from all connection with their wives. The enactment is perpetually repeated, and in one extended to sub-deacons.¹ The Council of Toledo prohibited the promotion of ecclesiastics who had children. The Council of Arles prohibited the ordination of a married priest,² unless he made a promise of divorce from the married state. Jerome distinctly asserts that it was the universal regulation of the East, of Egypt, and of Rome³ to ordain only those who were unmarried, or who ceased to be husbands. But even in the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries, the practice rebelled against this severe theory. Married Married bishops and clergy. clergy, even married bishops, and with children, occur in the ecclesiastical annals. Athanasius, in his letter to Dracontius, admits and allows the full right of the bishop to marriage.⁴ Gregory of Nazianzum was born after his father was bishop, and had a

¹ These councils of Carthage are dated A.D. 390, 418, and 419.

² "Assumi aliquem ad sacerdotium non posse in vinculo sacerdotii constitutum, nisi primum fuerit promissa conversio." — A.D. 452.

³ "Quid facient Orientis Ecclesiæ? quid Ægypti, et sedis Apostolicæ, quæ aut virgines clericos accipiunt aut continentes; aut si uxores habuerint, mariti esse desistunt." — Adv. Vigilantium, p. 281. Jerome appeals to Jovinian himself: "Certè confiteris non posse esse episcopum qui in episcopatu filios faciat, alioqui si deprehensus fuerit, non quasi vir tenebitur, sed quasi adulter damnabitur." — Adv. Jovin. 175. Compare Epiphanius, Hæres. liv. 4.

⁴ Athanasii Epistola ad Dracontium.

younger brother named Cæsarius.¹ Gregory of Nyssa and Hilary of Poitiers were married. Less distinguished names frequently occur, — those of Spyridon² and Eustathius.³ Synesius, whose character enabled him to accept episcopacy on his own terms, positively repudiated these unnatural restrictions on the freedom and holiness of the conjugal state. “God and the law, and the holy hand of Theophilus, bestowed on me my wife. I declare, therefore, solemnly, and call you to witness, that I will not be plucked from her, nor lie with her in secret, like an adulterer. But I hope and pray that we may have many and virtuous children.”⁴

The Council in Trullo only demanded this high test of spirituality, absolute celibacy, from bishops, and left the inferier clergy to their freedom. But the earlier Western Council of Toledo only admitted the deacon, and that under restrictions, to connubial intercourse; the presbyter who had children after his ordination could not be a bishop.⁵

This overstrained demand on the virtue, not of individuals in a high state of enthusiasm, but of a whole class of men; this strife with nature, in that which, in its irregular and lawless indulgence, is the source of so many evils and of so much misery, in its more moderate and legal form is the parent of the purest affections and the holiest charities; this isolation from those social ties, which, if at times they might withdraw them from total dedication to their sacred duties, in general would, by their tending to

Moral consequences.

¹ Gregory makes his father thus address him:—

Οὕτω τοσοῦτον ἐκμεμέτρηκας βίον
Ὅσος δὴλθε θυσίῳ ἐμοὶ χρόνος.

De Vitâ Suâ, v. 512.

² Sozom. i. 11; Socrat. i. 12.

³ Socrat. ii. 43.

⁴ Synesii Epist. 105.

⁵ Conc. Tolet. A.D. 400, can. 1.

soften and humanize, be the best school for the gentle and affectionate discharge of those duties, — the enforcement of the celibacy of the clergy, though not yet by law, by dominant opinion, was not slow in producing its inevitable evils. Simultaneously with the sterner condemnation of marriage, or at least the exaggerated praises of chastity, we hear the solemn denunciations of the law, and the deepening remonstrances of the more influential writers, against those secret evasions by which the clergy endeavored to obtain the fame without the practice of celibacy, to enjoy some of the pleasures and advantages without the crime of marriage. From the middle of the third century, in which the growing aversion to the marriage of the clergy begins to appear, we find the “sub-introduced” females constantly proscribed.¹ The intimate union of the priest with a young, often a beautiful female, who still passed to the world under the name of a virgin, and was called by the priest by the unsuspected name of sister, seems from the strong and reiterated language of Jerome,² Gregory Nazianzen, Chry-

Mulieres sub-introductæ.

¹ They are mentioned in the letter of the bishops of Antioch, against Paul of Samosata. The Council of Illiberis (incautiously) allowed a sister, or a virgin, dedicated to God, to reside with a bishop or presbyter, not a stranger.

² “Unde sine nuptiis aliud nomen uxorum? Imo unde novum concubinarum genus? Plus inferam. Unde meretrices univiræ? Eadem domo, uno cubiculo, sæpe uno tenentur et lectulo. Et suspiciosos nos vocant, si aliquid existimamus. Frater sororem virginem deserit: cælibem spernit virgo germanum: fratrem quærit extraneum, et cum in eodem proposito esse se simulent quærunt alienorum spiritale solatium, ut domi habeant carnale commercium.” — Hieronym. Epist. xxii. ad Eustochium. If the vehemence of Jerome’s language betrays his own ardent character and his monkish hostility to the clergy, the general charge is amply borne out by other writers. Many quotations may be found in Gothofred’s Note on the Law of Honorius. Gregory of Nazianzum says, *Ἀρσενά παντ’ ἀλέειν, συνείσακτον τε μύλιστα*. The language of Cyprian, however, even in the third century, is the strongest: “Certè ipse concubitus, ipse amplexus, ipsa confabulatio, et inosculatio, et conjacentium duorum turpis et fæda dormitio quantum dedecoris et crimini

sostom, and others, to have been almost general. It was interdicted by an imperial law.¹

Thus in every city, in almost every town and every village, of the Roman empire, had established itself a new permanent magistracy, in a certain sense independent of the government, with considerable inalienable endowments, and filled by men of a peculiar and sacred character, and recognized by the State. Their authority extended far beyond their jurisdiction; their influence, far beyond their authority. The internal organization was complete. The three great patriarchs in the East, throughout the West the Bishop of Rome, exercised a supreme, and, in some points, an appellat jurisdiction. Great ecclesiastical causes could be removed to their tribunal. Under them, the metropolitans, and in the next rank the bishops, governed their dioceses, and ruled the subordinate clergy, who now began to form parishes, separate districts to which their labors were to be confined. In the superior clergy had gradually become vested, not the ordination only, but the appointment, of the inferior; these could not quit the diocese without letters from the bishop, or be received or exercise their functions in another, without permission.

On the incorporation of the Church with the State, the co-ordinate civil and religious magistracy maintained

confitetur." Cyprian justly observes, that such intimacy would induce a jealous husband to take to his sword — *Epist. lxii. ad Pomponium.*

But the canon of the Council of Nicea, which prohibits the usage, and forbids the priest to have a subintroducta mulier, unless a mother, sister, or aunt, the only relationships beyond suspicion, and the still stronger tone of the law, show the frequency, as well as the evil, of the practice. Unhappily, they were blind to its real cause.

¹ "Eum qui probabilem sæculo disciplinam agit decolorari consortio sororiæ appellationis non decet." But this law of Honorius (A.D. 420) allowed the clergy to retain their wives, if they had been married before entering into orders. See, too, the third and fourth canons of the Council of Carthage, A.D. 348.

each its separate powers. On one side, as far as the actual celebration of the ecclesiastical ceremonial, and in their own internal affairs in general; on the other, in the administration of the military, judicial, and fiscal affairs of the State, the bounds of their respective authority were clear and distinct. As a citizen and subject, the Christian, the priest, and the bishop were alike amenable to the laws of the empire and to the imperial decrees, and liable to taxation, unless specially exempted, for the service of the State.¹ The Christian statesman, on the other hand, of the highest rank, was amenable to the ecclesiastical censures, and was bound to submit to the canons of the Church in matters of faith and discipline, and was entirely dependent on their judgment for his admission or rejection from the privileges or hopes of the Christian.

So far the theory was distinct and perfect; each had his separate and exclusive sphere; yet there could not but appear a debatable ground on which the two authorities came into collision, and neither could altogether refrain from invading the territory of his ally or antagonist.

The treaty between the contracting parties was, in fact, formed with such haste and precipitancy, that the rights of neither party could be defined or secured. Eager for immediate union, and

Union of
Church
and State.

Union of the
Church and
the State.

¹ The law of Constantius, which appears to withdraw the bishops entirely from the civil jurisdiction, and to give the privilege of being tried upon all charges by a tribunal of bishops, is justly considered by Gothofred as a local or temporary act, probably connected with the feuds concerning Arianism. — Cod. Theod. xvi. 2, 12, with Gothofred's note. Valens admitted the ecclesiastical courts to settle religious difficulties and slight offences. — xvi. 2; 23. The same is the scope of the more explicit law of Honorius. — xvi. 2, 201. The immunity of the clergy from the civil courts was of very much later date.

impatient of delay, they framed no deed of settlement, by which, when their mutual interests should be less identified, and jealousy and estrangement should arise, they might assert their respective rights, and enforce their several duties.

In ecclesiastical affairs, strictly so called, the supremacy of the Christian magistracy, it has been said, was admitted. They were the legislators of discipline, order, and doctrine. The festivals, the fasts, the usages and canons of the Church, the government of the clergy, were in their exclusive power. The decrees of particular synods and councils possessed undisputed authority, as far as their sphere extended. General councils were held binding on the whole Church. But it was far more easy to define that which did belong to the province of the Church than that which did not. Religion asserts its authority, and endeavors to extend its influence over the whole sphere of moral action, which is, in fact, over the whole of human life, its habits, manners, conduct. Christianity, as the most profound moral religion, exacted the most complete and universal obedience; and, as the acknowledged teachers and guardians of Christianity, the clergy continued to draw within their sphere every part of human life in which man is actuated by moral or religious motives. The moral authority, therefore, of the religion, and consequently of the clergy, might appear legitimately to extend over every transaction of life, from the legislature of the sovereign, which ought, in a Christian king, to be guided by Christian motive, to the domestic duties of the peasant, which ought to be fulfilled on the principle of Christian love.

But, on the other hand, the State was supreme over all its subjects, even over the clergy, in their character

of citizens. The whole tenure of property, to what use soever dedicated (except in such cases as the State itself might legalize on its first principles, and guarantee, when bestowed, as by gift or bequest), was under its absolute control; the immunities which it conferred it might revoke; and it would assert the equal authority of the constitutional laws over every one who enjoyed the protection of those laws. Thus, though in extreme cases these separate bounds of jurisdiction were clear, the tribunals of ecclesiastical and civil law could not but, in process of time, interfere with and obstruct each other.

But there was another prolific source of difference. The clergy in one sense, from being the representative body, had begun to consider themselves the Church; but, in another and more legitimate sense, the State, when Christian, as comprehending all the Christians of the empire, became the Church. Which was the legislative body,—the whole community of Christians? or the Christian aristocracy, who were in one sense the admitted rulers? And who was to appoint these rulers? It is quite clear, that from the first, though the consecration to the religious office was in the bishop and clergy, the laity had a voice in the ratification, if not in the appointment. Did not the State fairly succeed to all the rights of the laity, more particularly when privileges and endowments, attached to the ecclesiastical offices were conferred or guaranteed by the State, and therefore might appear in justice revocable, or liable to be regulated by the civil power?

This vital question at this time was still farther embarrassed by the rash eagerness with which the dominant Church called upon the State to rid it of its internal adversaries. When once the civil power was

recognized as cognizant of ecclesiastical offences, where was that power to end? The emperor, who commanded his subjects to be of one religion; might command them, by the same title, to adopt another. The despotic head of the State might assert his despotism as head of the Church. It must be acknowledged, that no theory, which has satisfactorily harmonized the relations of these two, at once, in one sense separate, in another identical, communities, has satisfied the reasoning and dispassionate mind; while the separation of the two communities, the total dissociation, as it were, of the Christian and the citizen, is an experiment apparently not likely to advance or perpetuate the influence of Christianity.

At all events, the hasty and unsettled compact of this period left room for constant jealousy and strife. As each was the stronger, it encroached upon and extended its dominion into the territory of the other. In general, though with very various fortunes, in different parts of the world, and at different periods, the Church was in the ascendant, and for many centuries confronted the State, at least on equal terms.

The first aggression, as it were, which the Church made on the State, was in assuming the cognizance over all questions and causes relating to marriage. In sanctifying this solemn contract, it could scarcely be considered as transgressing its proper limits as guardian of this primary element of social virtue and happiness. In the early Church, the benediction of the bishop or presbyter seems to have been previously sought by the Christian at the time of marriage. The Heathen rite of marriage was so manifestly religious, that the Christian, while he sought to avoid that idolatrous ceremony

Marriage brought under ecclesiastical discipline.

would wish to substitute some more simple and congenial form. In the general sentiment that this contract should be public and sacred, he would seek the sanction of his own community as its witnesses. Marriage not performed in the face of his Christian brethren was little better than an illicit union.¹

It was an object likewise of the early Christian community to restrict the marriage of Christians to Christians — to discountenance, if not prohibit, those with unbelievers.² This was gradually extended to marriages with heretics, or members of another Christian sect. When, therefore, the Church began to recognize five legal impediments to marriage, this was the 1st, — difference of religion as between Christians and infidels, Jews, or heretics. The 2d was the impediment of crime. Persons guilty of adultery were not allowed to marry according to the Roman law: this was recognized by the Church. A law of Constantius had

¹ "Ideo penes nos occultæ conjunctiones, id est, non prius apud ecclesiam professæ, juxta mœchiam et fornicationem judicari periclitantur." — Tertull. de Pudic. c. 4.

Though the right was solemnized in the presence of the Christian priest, and the Church attempted to impose a graver and more serious dignity, it was not easy to throw off the gay and festive character which had prevailed in the Heathen times. Paganism, or rather perhaps human nature, was too strong to submit. The austere preacher of Constantinople reproved the loose hymns to Venus, which were heard even at Christian weddings. The bride, he says, was borne by drunken men to her husband's house, among choirs of dancing harlots, with pipes and flutes and songs, full, to her chaste ear, of offensive license.

² A law of Valentinian II., Theodosius, and Arcadius (A.D. 388) prohibited the intermarriage of Jews and Christians. — Codex Theodos. iii. 7, 2. It was to be considered adultery. "Cave, Christiane, Gentili aut Judæo filiam tradere; cave, inquam, Gentilem aut Judæam atque alienigenam, hoc est, hæreticam, et omnem alienam à fide tuâ uxorem accersas tibi." — Ambros. de Abraham. c. 9. "Cum certissimè noveris tradi à nobis Christianam nisi Christiano non posse." — Augustin. Ep. 234, ad Rusticum.

The Council of Illiberis had prohibited Christians from giving their daughters in marriage to Gentiles (propter copiam puellarum), also to Jews, heretics, and especially to Heathen priests. — Can. xv., xvi., xvii.

made rape, or forcible abduction of a virgin, a capital offence; so, even with the consent of the injured female, marriage could not take place. 3. Impediments from relationship. Here also the Church was content to follow the Roman law, which was as severe and precise as the Mosaic Institutes.¹ 4. The civil impediment. Children adopted by the same father could not marry. A freeman could not marry a slave: the connection was only concubinage. It does not appear that the Church yet ventured to correct this vice of Roman society. 5. Spiritual relationship, between godfathers and their spiritual children: this was afterwards carried much farther. To these regulations for the repression of improper connections were added some other ecclesiastical impediments. There were holy periods in the year, in which it was forbidden to contract marriage. No one might marry while under ecclesiastical interdict, nor one who had made a vow of chastity.

The facility of divorce was the primary principle of corruption in Roman social life. Augustus
Divorce. had attempted to enforce some restrictions on this unlimited power of dissolving the matrimonial contract from caprice or the lightest motive. Probably the severity of Christian morals had obtained that law of Constantine which was so much too rigid for the state of society, as to be entirely ineffective from the impossibility of carrying it into execution.² It was relaxed by Constantius, and almost abrogated by Honorius.³ The inveterate evil remained. A Chris-

¹ See the various laws in the Cod. Theod. lib. iii. tit. 12, De Incestu Nuptiis.

² Codex Theodos. iii. 16, 1. See vol. ii. p. 401.

³ By the law of Honorius, — 1. The woman who demanded a divorce without sufficient proof forfeited her dowry, was condemned to banishment.

tian writer, at the beginning of the fifth century, complains that men changed their wives as quickly as their clothes, and that marriage chambers were set up as easily as booths in a market.¹ At a later period than that to which our history extends, when Justinian attempted to prohibit all divorces except those on account of chastity, — that is, when the parties embraced the monastic life, — he was obliged to relax the law on account of the fearful crimes, the plots and poisonings, and other evils, which it introduced into domestic life.

But though it could not correct or scarcely mitigate this evil by public law in the general body of society, Christianity, in its proper and more peculiar sphere, had invested marriage in a religious sanctity, which at least, to a limited extent, repressed this social evil. By degrees, separation from bed and board, even in the case of adultery, the only cause which could dissolve the tie, was substituted and enforced by the clergy instead of legal divorce. Over all the ceremo-

could not contract a second marriage, and was without hope of restoration to civil rights. 2. If she made out only a tolerable case (convicted her husband only of *mediocris culpa*), she only forfeited her dowry, and could not contract a second marriage, but was liable to be prosecuted by her husband for adultery. 3. If she made a strong case (*gravis causa*), she retained her dowry, and might marry again after five years. The husband, in the first case, forfeited the gifts and dowry, and was condemned to perpetual celibacy, not having liberty to marry again after a certain number of years. In the second, he forfeited the dowry, but not the donation, and could marry again after two years. In the third, he was bound to prosecute his guilty wife. On her conviction, he retained the dowry, and might marry again immediately. — Cod. Theodos. iii. xvi. 2.

¹ “Mulieres à maritis tanquam vestes subinde mutari, et thalamos tam sæpe et facile strui quam nundinarum tabernas.” — Asterius Amasenus apud Combefis. Auct. t. i.

The story has been often quoted from St. Jerome, of the man (of the lowest class) in Rome, who had had twenty wives, not divorced (he had buried them all): his wife had had twenty-two husbands. There was a great anxiety to know which would outlive the other. The man carried the day, and bore his wife to the grave in a kind of triumphal procession. — Hieronym. Epist. xci. p. 745.

nial forms, and all expressions which related to marriage, the Church threw the utmost solemnity; it was said to resemble the mystic union of Christ and the Church; till at length marriage grew up into a sacrament, indissoluble until the final separation of death, except by the highest ecclesiastical authority.¹ It is impossible to calculate the effect of this canonization, as it were, of marriage, the only remedy which could be applied, first to the corrupt manners of Roman society, and afterwards to the consequences of the barbarian invasions, in which, notwithstanding the strong moral element in the Teutonic character, and the respect for women (which no doubt was one of the original principles of chivalry), yet the dominance of brute force, and the unlimited rights of conquest, could not but lead to the perpetual, lawless, and violent dissolution of the marriage tie.²

The cognizance of wills, another department in which the Church assumed a power not
 Wills. strictly ecclesiastical, seems to have arisen partly from an accidental cause. It was the custom among the Heathen to deposit wills in the temples, as a place of security: the Christians followed their practice, and chose their churches as the depositaries of these important documents. They thus came under the custody of the clergy, who, from guardians, became, in their courts, the judges of their authenticity

¹ The Eastern Churches had a horror of second marriage; a presbyter was forbidden to be present at the wedding-feast of a digamist. — Can. vii. See above.

² It is curious to trace the rapid fall of Roman pride. Valentinian made the intermarriage of a Roman provincial with a *barbarian* a capital crime (A.D. 370). — Codex Theodos. iii. 14, 1. Under Theodosius, Fravitta, the Goth, married a Roman woman with the consent of the emperor. — Eunap. Excerpt. Legat. In another century, the daughters of emperors were the willing or the enforced brides of barbarian kings.

or legality, and at length a general tribunal for all matters relating to testaments.

Thus religion laid its sacred control on all the material incidents of human life, and around the ministers of religion gathered all the influence thus acquired over the sentiments of mankind. The font of baptism usually received the Christian infant, and the form of baptism was uttered by the priest or bishop; the marriage was unhallowed without the priestly benediction; and, at the close of life, the minister of religion was at hand to absolve and to re-assure the departing spirit; at the funeral, he ratified, as it were, the solemn promises of immortality. But the great, permanent, and perpetual source of sacerdotal authority was the penitential discipline of the Church, which was universally recognized as belonging exclusively to the jurisdiction of the clergy. Christianity had sufficient Penitential discipline. power, in a certain degree, to engross the mind and heart, but not to keep under perpetual restraint the unruly passions or the inquisitive mind. The best were most conscious of human infirmity, and most jealous of their own slight aberrations from the catholic belief; the bad had not merely their own conscience, but public fame and the condemnatory voice of the community, to prostrate them before the visible arbiters of the All-seeing Power. Sin, from the most heinous delinquency, or the darkest heresy, to the most trivial fault or the slightest deviation from the established belief, could only be reconciled by the advice, the guidance, at length by the direct authority, of the priest. He judged of its magnitude, he prescribed the appointed penance. The hierarchy were supposed to be invested with the keys of heaven and of hell: they undoubtedly held those which unlock the

human heart,—fear and hope. And when once the mind was profoundly affected by Christianity, when hope had failed to excite to more generous obedience, they applied the baser and more servile instrument without scruple and without remorse.

The penitential discipline of the Church, no doubt, grew up, like other usages, by slow degrees: its regulations were framed into a system to meet the exigences of the times; but we discern, at a very early period, the awful power of condemning to the most profound humiliation, to the most agonizing contrition, to the shame of public confession, to the abasing supplication before the priest, to long seclusion from the privileges and the society of the Christian community. Even then public confession was the first process in the fearful yet inevitable ceremonial. “Confession of sin,” says Tertullian,¹ “is the proper discipline for the abasement and humiliation of man; it enforces that mode of life which can alone find mercy with God; it prescribes the fitting dress and food of the penitent to be in sackcloth and ashes, to darken the body with filth, to depress the soul with anguish; it allows only the simplest food, enough and no more than will maintain life. Constantly to fast and pray, to groan, to weep, to howl day and night before the Lord our God, to grovel at the feet of the presbyter, to kneel at the altar of God, to implore from all the brethren their deprecatory supplications.” Subsequently, the more complete penitential system rigidly regulated the most minute particulars,—the attitude, the garb, the language, or the more expressive silence. The place in which the believer stood, showed to the whole Church how far the candidate for salvation through Christ had

¹ De Pœnitentiâ, c. 9.

been thrown back in his spiritual course, what progress he was making to pardon and peace. The penitent was clothed in sackcloth, his head was strewn with ashes ; men shaved their heads, women left their dishevelled hair flung over their bosoms ; they wore a peculiar veil. The severest attendance on every religious service was exacted, all diversions were proscribed, marriage was not permitted during the time of penance, the lawful indulgence of the marriage bed was forbidden. Although a regular formulary, which gradually grew into use,¹ imposed canonical penances of a certain period for certain offences, yet that period might be rigidly required or shortened by the authority of the bishop. For some offences, the penitent, who it was believed was abandoned to the power of Satan, was excluded from all enjoyment, all honor, and all society, to the close of life ; and the doors of reconciliation were hardly opened to the departing spirit, — wonderful proof how profoundly the doctrines of Christianity had sunk into the human heart, and of the enormous power (and what enormous power is not liable to abuse?) in which the willing reverence of the people had invested the priesthood.

But something more fearful still remained. Over all the community hung the tremendous sentence of excommunication, tantamount to a sentence of spiritual death.² This sentence, though not as yet dependent on his will, was pronounced and executed by the reli-

¹ On the Penitentiaries, compare Latin Christianity, book iii. c. 5.

² "Interfici Deus jussit sacerdotibus non obtemperantes, judicibus à se ad tempus constitutis non obedientes; sed tunc quidem gladio occidebantur, quando adhuc et circumcisio carnis manebat. Nunc autem quia circumcisio spiritalis esse apud fideles Dei servos cœpit, spiritali gladio superbi et contumaces *necantur*, dum de ecclesiâ ejiciuntur." — Cyprian Epist. lxii.

"Nunc agit in ecclesiâ excommunicatio, quod agebat tunc in interfectis." — Augustin. Q. 39, in Deuteron.

gious magistrate. The clergy adhered to certain regular forms of process, but the ultimate decree rested with them.

Excommunication was of two kinds : first, that which excluded from the communion, and threw back the initiate Christian into the ranks of the uninitiate. This separation or suspension allowed the person under ban to enter the church, to hear the psalms and sermon, and, in short, all that was permitted to the catechumen.

But the more terrible excommunication by anathema altogether banished the delinquent from the Church and the society of Christians : it annulled for ever his hopes of immortality through Christ ; it drove him out as an outcast to the dominion of the Evil Spirit. The Christian might not communicate with him in the ordinary intercourse of life : he was a moral leper, whom it was the solemn duty of all to avoid, lest they should partake in his contagion. The sentence of one church was rapidly promulgated throughout Christendom ; and the excommunicated in Egypt or Syria found the churches in Gaul or Spain closed against him : he was an exile without a resting-place. As long as Heathenism survived, at least in equal temporal power and distinction, and another society received with welcome, or at least with undiminished respect, the exile from Christianity, the excommunicated might lull his remaining terrors to rest, and forget, in the business or dissipation of the world, his forfeited hopes of immortality. But when there was but one society, that of the Christians, throughout the world, or at best but a feeble and despised minority, he stood a marked and branded man. Those who were, perhaps, not better Christians, but who had escaped the fatal censures

of the Church, would perhaps seize the opportunity of showing their zeal by avoiding the outcast. If he did not lose civil privileges, he lost civil estimation ; he was altogether excluded from human respect and human sympathies ; he was a legitimate, almost a designated, object of scorn, distrust, and aversion.

The nature, the extent, and some of the moral and even political advantages of excommunication, are illustrated in the act of the celebrated Synesius. The power of the Christian bishop, Synesius. in his hands, appears under its noblest and most beneficial form. Synesius became a Christian bishop without renouncing the habits, the language, and, in a great degree, the opinions, of a philosopher. His writings, more especially his Odes, blend with a very scanty Christianity the mystic theology of the later Platonism ; but it is rather philosophy adopting Christian language than Christianity moulding philosophy to its own uses. Yet so high was the character of Synesius, that even the worldly prelate of Alexandria, Theophilus, approved of his elevation to the episcopate in the obscure town of Ptolemais, near Cyrene. Synesius felt the power with which he was invested, and employed it with a wise vigor and daring philanthropy, which commanded the admiration both of philosophy and of religion. The low-born Andronicus was the Prefect, or rather the scourge and tyrant, of Libya ; his exactions were unprecedented, and enforced by tortures of unusual cruelty even in that age and country. The province groaned and bled, without hope of relief, under the hateful and sanguinary oppression. Synesius had tried in vain the milder language of persuasion upon the intractable tyrant. At length he put forth the terrors of the Church to shield the people ; and

for his rapacity, which had amounted to sacrilege, and for his inhumanity, the president of the whole province was openly condemned, by a sentence of excommunication, to the public abhorrence, excluded from the society, and denied the common rights of men. He was expelled from the Church, as the Devil from Paradise; every Christian temple, every sanctuary, was closed against the man of blood; the priest was not even to permit him the rites of Christian burial; every private man and every magistrate was to exclude him from their houses and from their tables. If the rest of Christendom refused to ratify and execute the sentence of the obscure church of Ptolemais, they were guilty of the sin of schism. The church of Ptolemais would not communicate or partake of the divine mysteries with those who thus violated ecclesiastical discipline. The excommunication included the accomplices of the president's guilt, and, by a less justifiable extension of power, their families. Andronicus quailed before the interdiction, which he feared might find countenance in the court of Constantinople; bowed before the protector of the people, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence.¹

The salutary thunder of sacerdotal excommunication might here and there strike some eminent delinquent;² but ecclesiastical discipline, which, in the earlier and more fervent period of the religion, had watched with holy jealousy the whole life of the indi-

¹ Synesii Epistolæ, lvii., lviii.

² There is a canon of the Council of Toledo (A.D. 408), that, if any man in power shall have robbed one in holy orders, or a *poor man* (*quemlibet pauperiorem*), or a monk, and the bishop shall send to demand a hearing for the cause, should the man in power treat his message with contempt, letters shall be sent to all the bishops of the province, declaring him excommunicated till he has heard the cause or made restitution. — Can. xi. Labbe, ii. 1225.

vidual, was baffled by the increase of votaries, which it could no longer submit to this severe and constant superintendence. The clergy could not command, nor the laity require, the sacred duty of secession and outward penance from the multitude of sinners, when they were the larger part of the community. But heresy of opinion was more easily detected than heresy of conduct. Gradually, from a moral as well as a religious power, the discipline became almost exclusively religious, or rather confined itself to the speculative, while it almost abandoned in despair the practical effects of religion. Heresy became the one great crime for which excommunication was pronounced in its most awful form; the heretic was the one being with whom it was criminal to associate, who forfeited all the privileges of religion, and all the charities of life.

Ecclesiastical censures chiefly confined to heresy.

Nor was this all: in pursuit of the heretic, the Church was not content to rest within her own sphere, to wield her own arms of moral temperament, and to exclude from her own territory. She formed a fatal alliance with the State, and raised that which was strictly an ecclesiastical, an offence against the religious community, into a civil crime, amenable to temporal penalties. The Church, when she ruled the mind of a religious or superstitious emperor, could not forego the immediate advantage of his authority to further her own cause, and hailed his welcome intrusion on her own internal legislation. In fact, the autocracy of the emperor over the Church, as well as over the State, was asserted in all those edicts which the Church, in its blind zeal, hailed with transport as the marks of his allegiance, but which confounded in inextricable, and, to the present time,

Executed by the State.

in deplorable confusion, the limits of the religious and the civil power. The imperial rescripts, which made heresy a civil offence by affixing penalties which were not purely religious, trespassed as much upon the real principles of the original religious republic, as against the immutable laws of conscience and Christian charity. The tremendous laws of Theodosius,¹ constituting heresy a capital offence, punishable by the civil power, are said to have been enacted only as a terror to evil-believers, but they betrayed too clearly the darkening spirit of the times; the next generation would execute what the laws of the last would enact. The most distinguished bishops of the time raised a cry of horror at the first executions for religion; but it was their humanity which was startled. They did not perceive that they had sanctioned, by the smallest civil penalty, a false and fatal principle; that though, by the legal establishment, the Church and the State had become, in one sense, the same body, yet the associating principle of each remained entirely distinct, and demanded an entirely different and independent system of legislation and administration of the law. The Christian hierarchy bought the privilege of persecution at the price of Christian independence.

It is difficult to decide whether the language of the book in the Theodosian code, entitled "On Heretics," contrasts more strongly with the comprehensive, equitable, and parental tone of the Roman jurisprudence, or with the gentle and benevolent spirit of the Gospel, or even with the primary principles of the ecclesiastical community.² The emperor, of his sole and supreme

Civil punishment for ecclesiastical offences.

¹ See ch. viii.

² "Hæreticorum vocabulo continentur, et latis adversus eos sanctionibus

authority, without any recognition of ecclesiastical advice or sanction, — the emperor, who himself might be an Arian or Eunomian or Manichean, who had so recently been an Arian, — defines heresy to be the very slightest deviation from Catholic verity; and in a succession of statutes inflicts civil penalties, and excludes from the common rights of men the maintainers of certain opinions. Nothing treasonable, immoral, dangerous to the peace of society, is alleged; the crime, the civil crime, as it now becomes, consists solely in opinions. The law of Constantine, which granted special immunities to certain of his subjects, might perhaps, with some show of equity, confine those immunities to a particular class.¹ But the gradually darkening statutes proceed from the withholding of privileges to the prohibition of meetings,² then through confiscation,³ the refusal of the common right of bequeathing property, fine,⁴ exile,⁵ to capital punishment.⁶ The latter, indeed, was enacted only against some of the more obscure sects, and some of the Donatists, whose turbulent and seditious conduct might demand the interference of the civil power; but still they are condemned, not as rebels and insurgents, but as heretics.⁷

debent succumbere, qui vel levi argumento à judicio Catholice religionis et tramite *detecti* fuerint deviare." This is a law of Arcadius. The practice was more lenient than the law.

¹ The first law of Constantine restricts the immunities which he grants to Catholics. — Cod. Theodos. xvi.

² The law of Gratian (IV.) confiscates the houses or even fields in which heretical conventicles are held. See also law of Theodosius, viii.

³ *Leges* xi., xii.

⁴ *Ibid.* xxi.

⁵ *Ibid.* xviii., liii., lviii.

⁶ The law of Theodosius enacts this, not against the general body, but some small sections of Manicheans, "*Summo supplicio et inextinguibili pœnâ jubemus affligi.*" — ix. This law sanctions the ill-omened name of inquisitors. Compare law xxxv. The "*interminata pœna*" of law lx. is against Eunomians, Arians, and Macedonians.

⁷ *Ad Heraclianum*, lvi. The imperial laws against second baptisms are

In building up this vast and majestic fabric of the hierarchy, though individuals might be actuated by personal ambition or interest, and the narrow corporate spirit might rival loftier motives in the consolidation of ecclesiastical power, yet the great object, which was steadily if dimly seen, was the advancement of mankind in religion, and through religion to temporal and eternal happiness. Dazzled by the glorious spectacle of provinces, of nations, gradually brought within the pale of Christianity, the great men of the fourth century of Christianity were not and could not be endowed with prophetic sagacity to discern the abuses of sacerdotal domination, and the tyranny which, long centuries after, might be exercised over the human mind in the name of religion. *We* may trace the hierarchical principles of Cyprian or of Ambrose to what may seem their natural consequences, religious crusades and the fires of the inquisition; *we* may observe the tendency of unsocial monasticism to quench the charities of life, to harden into cruelty, grovel into licentiousness, and brood over its own ignorance; *we* may trace the predestinarian doctrines of Augustine darkening into narrow bigotry, or maddening to uncharitable fanaticism: *they* only contemplated, *they* only could contemplate, a great moral and religious power opposing civil tyranny, or at least affording a refuge from it, purifying domestic morals, elevating and softening the human heart;¹ a whole-

still more singular invasions of the civil upon the ecclesiastical authority. — xvi. tit. vi.

¹ The laws bear some pleasing testimonies to the activity of Christian benevolence in many of the obscure scenes of human wretchedness. See the humane law regarding prisoners, that they might have proper food, and the use of the bath. "Nec deerit antistitum Christianæ religionis cura laudabilis, quæ ad observationem constituti judicis hanc ingerat monitionem."

some and benevolent force compelling men by legitimate means to seek wisdom, virtue, and salvation; the better part of mankind withdrawing, in holy prudence and wise timidity, from the corruptions of a foul and cruel age, and devoting itself to its own self-advancement to the highest spiritual perfection; and the general pious assertion of the universal and unlimited providence and supremacy of God. None but the hopeful achieve great revolutions; and what hopes could equal those which the loftier Christian minds might justly entertain of the beneficent influences of Christianity?

We cannot wonder at the growth of the ecclesiastical power, if the Church were merely considered as a new sphere in which human genius, virtue, and benevolence might develop their unimpeded energies, and rise above the general debasement. This was almost the only way in which any man could devote great abilities or generous activity to a useful purpose with reasonable hopes of success. The civil offices were occupied by favor and intrigue, often acquired most easily and held most permanently

Dignity and
advantage of
the clerical
station.

The Christian bishop was to take care that the judge did his duty. — Cod Theodos. ix. 3, 7.

As early as the reign of Valentinian and Valens, prisoners were released at Easter ("ob diem paschæ, quem intimo corde celebramus"), excepting those committed for the crimes of treason, poisoning, magic, adultery, rape, or homicide. — ix. 36, 3, 4. These statutes were constantly renewed, with the addition of some more excepted crimes, — sacrilege, robbery of tombs, and coining.

There is a very singular law of Arcadius, prohibiting the clergy and the monks from interfering with the execution of the laws, and forcibly taking away condemned criminals from the hands of justice. They were allowed, at the same time, the amplest privilege of merciful intercession. This was connected with the privilege of asylum. — Codex Theodos. ix. 40, 16.

There is another singular law by which corporal punishments were not to be administered in Lent, except against the Isaurian robbers, who were to be dealt with without delay. — ix. 35, 5, 6, 7.

by the worst men for the worst purposes. The utter extinction of freedom had left no course of honorable distinction, as an honest advocate or an independent jurist. Literature was worn out; rhetoric had degenerated into technical subtlety; philosophy had lost its hold upon the mind. Even the great military commands were filled by fierce and active barbarians, on whose energy Rome relied for the protection of her frontiers. In the Church alone was security, influence, independence, fame, even wealth, and the opportunity of serving mankind. The pulpit was the only rostrum from which the orator would be heard; feeble as was the voice of Christian poetry, it found an echo in the human heart. The episcopate was the only office of dignity which could be obtained without meanness, or exercised without fear. Whether he sought the peace of a contemplative, or the usefulness of an active life, this was the only sphere for the man of conscious mental strength; and, if he felt the inward satisfaction that he was either securing his own or advancing the salvation of others, the lofty mind would not hesitate what path to choose through the darkening and degraded world.

The just way to consider the influence of the Christian hierarchy (without which, in its complete and vigorous organization, it is clear that the religion could not have subsisted throughout these ages of disaster and confusion) is to imagine, if possible, the state of things without that influence. Consider a tyranny the most oppressive and debasing, without any principles of free or hopeful resistance, or resistance only attainable by the complete dismemberment of the Roman empire and its severance into a number of hostile States; the general morals at the lowest

General
influence of
the clergy.

state of depravation, with nothing but a religion totally without influence, and a philosophy without authority, to correct its growing cruelty and licentiousness; a very large portion of mankind in hopeless slavery, with nothing to mitigate it but the insufficient control of fear in the master, or occasional gleams of humanity or political foresight in the government, with no inward consolation or feeling of independence whatever. In the midst of this, contemplate the invasion of hostile barbarians in every quarter, and the complete wreck of civilization; with no commanding influence to assimilate the adverse races, without the protection or conservative tendency of any religious feeling to soften them, and at length to re-organize and re-create literature, the arts of building, painting, and music; the Latin language itself breaking up into as many countless dialects as there were settlements of barbarous tribes, without a guardian or sacred depository. It is difficult adequately to darken the picture of ignorance, violence, confusion, and wretchedness; but, without this adequate conception of the probable state of the world without it, it is impossible to judge with fairness or candor the obligations of Europe and of civilization to the Christian hierarchy.

CHAPTER II.

Public Spectacles.

THE Greek and Roman inhabitants of the empire were attached with equal intensity to their favorite spectacles, whether of more solemn religious origin, or of lighter and more festive kind. These amusements are perhaps more congenial to the southern character, from the greater excitability of temperament, the less variable climate, which rarely interferes with enjoyment in the open air; and, throughout the Roman world, they had long been fostered by those republican institutions which gave to every citizen a place and an interest in all public ceremonies, privileges which, in this respect, long outlived the institutions themselves. The population of the great capitals had preserved only the dangerous and pernicious part of freedom, the power of subsisting either without regular industry or with but moderate exertion. The perpetual distribution of corn, and the various largesses at other times, emancipated them in a great degree from the wholesome control of their own necessities; and a vast and uneducated multitude was maintained in idle and dissolute inactivity. It was absolutely necessary to occupy much of this vacant time with public diversions; and the invention, the wealth, and the personal exertions of the higher orders were taxed to gratify this insatiable appetite. Policy demanded that which ambition and the love of popularity had

freely supplied in the days of the republic, and which personal vanity continued to offer, though with less prodigal and willing munificence. The more retired and domestic habits of Christianity might in some degree seclude a sect from the public diversions, but it could not change the nature or the inveterate habits of a people; it was either swept along by, or contented itself with giving a new direction to, the impetuous and irresistible current; it was obliged to substitute some new excitement for that which it peremptorily prohibited, and reluctantly to acquiesce in that which it was unable to suppress.

Christianity had cut off that part of the public spectacles which belonged exclusively to Paganism. Even if all the temples at Rome were not, as Jerome asserts, covered with dust and cobwebs,¹ yet, notwithstanding the desperate efforts of the old aristocracy, the tide of popular interest, no doubt, set away from the deserted and mouldering fanes of the Heathen deities, and towards the churches of the Christians. And, if this was the case in Rome, at Constantinople and throughout the empire, the Pagan ceremonial was either extinct, or gradually expiring, or lingering on in unimpressive regularity. On the other hand, the modest and unimposing ritual of Christianity naturally, and almost necessarily, expanded into pomp and dignity. To the deep devotion of the early Christians the place and circumstances of worship were indifferent: piety finds everywhere its own temple. In the low and unfurnished chamber, in the forest, in the desert, in the catacomb, the Christian adored his Redeemer, prayed, chanted his hymn, and partook of

¹ "Fuligine et araneorum telis omnia Romæ templa cooperta sunt: inuidans populus ante delubra semiruta, currit ad martyrum tumulos." — *Epist* lvii. p. 590.

the sacred elements. Devotion wanted no accessories; faith needed no subsidiary excitement; or, if it did, it found them in the peril, the novelty, the adventurous and stirring character, of the scene, or in the very meanness and poverty, contrasted with the gorgeous worship which it had abandoned; in the mutual attachment, and in the fervent emulation, which spreads throughout a small community.

But among the more numerous and hereditary Christians of this period, the temple and the solemn service were indispensable to enforce and maintain the devotion. Religion was not strong enough to disdain, and far too earnest to decline, any legitimate means of advancing her cause. The whole ceremonial was framed with the art which arises out of the intuitive perception of that which is effective towards its end. That which was felt to be awful was adopted to enforce awe; that which drew the people to the church, and affected their minds when there, became sanctified to the use of the Church. The edifice itself arose more lofty with the triumph of the faith, and enlarged itself to receive the multiplying votaries. Christianity disdained that its God and its Redeemer should be less magnificently honored than the demons of Paganism. In the service it delighted to transfer and to breathe, as it were, a sublimer sense into the common appellations of the Pagan worship, whether from the ordinary ceremonial, or the more secret mysteries. The church became a temple;¹ the table of the communion, an altar; the celebration of the Eucharist, the appalling or the unbloody sacrifice.² The ministering functionaries multiplied with the

¹ Ambrose and Lactantius, and even Irenæus, use this term. See Bingham, b. viii. 1, 4.

² The *φρίκτη*, or the *ἀναίμακτος θυσία*

variety of the ceremonial; each was consecrated to his office by a lower kind of ordination; but a host of subordinate attendance by degrees swelled the officiating train. The incense, the garlands, the lamps, all were gradually adopted by zealous rivalry, or seized as the lawful spoils of vanquished Paganism and consecrated to the service of Christ.

The Church rivalled the old Heathen mysteries in expanding by slow degrees its higher privileges. Christianity was itself the great Mystery, unfolded gradually and in general after a long and searching probation. It still reserved the power of opening at once its gates to the more distinguished proselytes, and of jealously and tardily unclosing them to more doubtful neophytes. It permitted its sanctuary, as it were, to be stormed at once by eminent virtue and unquestioned zeal; but the common mass of mankind were never allowed to consider it less than a hard-won privilege to be received into the Church; and this boon was not to be dispensed with lavish or careless hands.¹ Its preparatory ceremonial of abstinence, personal purity, ablution, secrecy, closely resembled that of the Pagan mysteries (perhaps each may have contributed to the other); so the theologic dialect of Christianity spoke the same language. Yet Christianity substituted for the feverish enthusiasm of some of these rites, and the phantasmagoric terrors of others, with their vague admonitions to purity, a searching but gently administered moral discipline, and more sober religious excitement. It retained, in-

¹ It is one of the bitterest charges of Tertullian against the heretics, that they did not keep up this distinction between the catechumens and the faithful. "*Imprimis quis catechumenus, quis fidelis, incertum est: pariter adeunt, pariter orant.*" Even the Heathen were admitted; thus "pearls were cast before swine." — *De Præscript. Hæret.* c. 41.

deed, much of the dramatic power, though under another form.

The divisions between the different orders of wor-
Divisions of the church. shippers enforced by the sacerdotal authority, and observed with humble submission by the people, could not but impress the mind with astonishment and awe. The stranger on entering the spacious open court, which was laid out before the more splendid churches, with porticos or cloisters on each side, beheld first the fountain or tank, where the worshippers were expected to wash their hands, and purify themselves, as it were, for the divine presence. Lingering in these porticos, or approaching timidly the threshold which they dared not pass, or, at the
The porch. farthest, entering only into the first porch, or vestibule,¹ and pressing around the disciples to solicit their prayers, he would observe men, pale, dejected, clad in sackcloth, oppressed with the profound consciousness of their guilt, acquiescing in the justice of the ecclesiastical censure which altogether

¹ There is much difficulty and confusion respecting these divisions of the church. The fact probably is, that, according to the period or the local circumstances, the structure and the arrangement were more or less complicated. Tertullian says distinctly, “non modò limine verum omni ecclesiæ tecto submovemus.” Where the churches were of a simpler form, and had no roofed narthex or vestibule, these penitents stood in the open court before the church; even later, the “flentes” and the “hiemantes” formed a particular class.

A canon of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus gives the clearest view of these arrangements: Ἡ πρόσκλαυσις ἔξω τῆς πύλης τοῦ εὐκτηρίου ἐστίν, ἐνθα ἐστῶτα τὸν ἀμαρτάνοντα χρῆ τῶν εἰσιόντων δεῖσθαι πιστῶν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ εὐχεσθαι· ἡ ἀκρόασις ἐνδοθι τῆς πύλης ἐν τῷ νάρθηκι, ἐνθα ἐστῆναι χρῆ τὸν ἡμαρτήκοτα, ἕως τῶν κατηχουμένων, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν ἐξέρχεσθαι· ἀκούων γὰρ φησὶ τῶν γραφῶν καὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας, ἐκβαλέσθω, καὶ μὴ ἀξιούσθω προσευχῆς· ἡ δὲ ὑπόπτωσις, ἵνα ἔσωθεν τῆς πύλης τοῦ ναοῦ ἰστάμενος, μετὰ τῶν κατηχουμένων ἐξέρχεται· ἡ οὐστάσις, ἵνα συνίσταται τοῖς πιστοῖς καὶ μὴ ἐξέρχεται μετὰ τῶν κατηχουμένων· τελευταῖον ἡ μέθεξις τῶν ἀγιασμάτων. — Apud Labbe, Conc. i. p. 842.

excluded them from the Christian community. These were the first class of penitents, men of notorious guilt, whom only a long period of ^{The} penitents. this humiliating probation could admit even within the hearing of the sacred service. As he advanced to the gates, he must pass the scrutiny of the door-keepers, who guarded the admission into the church, and distributed each class of worshippers into their proper place. The stranger, whether Heathen or Jew, might enter into the part assigned to the catechumens or novices and the penitents of the second order (the hearers), that he might profit by the religious instruction.¹ He found himself in the ^{The narthex.} first division of the main body of the church, of which the walls were lined by various marbles, the roof often ceiled with mosaic, and supported by lofty columns with gilded capitals; the doors were inlaid with ivory or silver; the distant altar glittered with precious stones.² In the midst of the nave stood the pulpit, or reading-desk (the ambo), around which were arranged the singers, who chanted to the most solemn music, poetry, much of it familiar to the Jew, as belonging to his own sacred writings, to the Heathen

¹ This part of the church was usually called the narthex. But this term, I believe, of the sixth century, was not used with great precision, or rather perhaps was applied to different parts of the church, according to their greater or less complexity of structure. It is sometimes used for the porch or vestibule: in this sense there were several nartheces (St. Sophia had four). Mamachi (vol. i. p. 216) insists that it was divided from the nave by a wall. But this cannot mean the narthex into which the ἀκροῦμενοι were admitted, as the object of their admission was that they might hear the service.

“Episcopus nullum prohibeat intrare ecclesiam, et audire verbum Dei, sive hæreticum, sive Judæum usque ad missam catechumenorum.” — Concil. Carthag. iv. c. 84.

² “Alii ædificent ecclesias, vestiant parietes marmorum crustis, columnarum moles advehant, earumque deaurant capita, pretiosum ornatum non sententia, ebore argentoque valvas, et gemmis distinguant altaria. Non reprehendo, non abnuo.” — Hieronym. Epist. viii. ad Demetriad.

full of the noblest images, expressive of the divine power and goodness; adapting itself with the most exquisite versatility to every devout emotion, melting into the most pathetic tenderness, or swelling out into the most appalling grandeur. The pulpit was then ascended by one of the inferior order, the reader of certain portions or extracts from the sacred volumes, in which God himself spoke to the awe-struck auditory. He was succeeded by an orator of a higher dignity, a presbyter or a bishop, who sometimes addressed the people from the steps which led up to the chancel, sometimes chose the more convenient and elevated position of the ambo.¹ He was a man usually

The
preacher. of the highest attainments and eloquence, and instead of the frivolous and subtile questions which the Pagan was accustomed to hear in the schools of rhetoric or philosophy, he fearlessly agitated and peremptorily decided on such eternally and universally awakening topics as the responsibility of man before God, the immortality and future destination of the soul,—topics of which use could not deaden the interest to the believer, but which, to an unaccustomed ear, were as startling as important. The mute attention of the whole assembly was broken only by uncontrollable acclamations, which frequently interrupted the more moving preachers. Around the pulpit was the last order of penitents, who prostrated themselves in humble homage during the prayers and the benediction of the bishop.

¹ Chrysostom generally preached from the ambo. — Socr. vi. 5; Sozomen, viii. 5. Both usages prevailed in the West.

Seu te conspicuis gradibus venerabilis aræ
Concionaturum plebs sedula circumstat.

Sid. Apollon. can. xvi.

Fronte sub adversâ gradibus sublime tribunal
Tollitur, antistes prædicat unde Deum.

Prudent. Hymn. ad Hippolyt.

Here the steps of the profane stranger must pause ; an insuperable barrier, which he could not pass without violence, secluded the initiate from the society of the less perfect. Yet, till the more secret ceremonial began, he might behold, at dim and respectful distance, the striking scene, first of the baptized worshippers in their order, the females in general in galleries above (the virgins separate from the matrons). Beyond, in still further secluded sanctity, on an elevated semicircle, around the bishop, sat the clergy, attended by the sub-deacons, acolyths, and those of inferior order. Even the gorgeous throne of the emperor was below this platform. Before them was the mystic and awful table, the altar, as it began to be called in the fourth century, over which was sometimes suspended a richly wrought canopy (the ciborium): the altar was covered with fine linen. In the third century, the simpler vessels of glass or other cheap material had given place to silver and gold. In the later persecutions, the cruelty of the Heathen was stimulated by their avarice ; and some of the sufferers, while they bore their own agonies with patience, were grieved to the heart to see the sacred vessels pillaged, and turned to profane or indecent uses. In the Eastern churches, richly embroidered curtains overshadowed the approach to the altar, or light doors secluded altogether the Holy of Holies from the profane gaze of the multitude.

Such was the ordinary Christian ceremonial as it addressed the mass of mankind. But at a certain time, the uninitiate were dismissed, the veil was dropped which shrouded the hidden rites, the doors were closed, profane steps might not cross the threshold of the baptistery, or linger in the church, when

the liturgy of the faithful, the office of the Eucharist, began. The veil of concealment was first spread over the peculiar rites of Christianity from caution. The religious assemblies were, strictly speaking, unlawful, and they were shrouded in secrecy lest they should be disturbed by the intrusion of their watchful enemies;¹ and it was this unavoidable secrecy which gave rise to the frightful fables of the Heathen concerning the nature of these murderous or incestuous banquets. As they could not be public, of necessity they took the form of mysteries, and as mysteries became objects of jealousy and of awe. As the assemblies became more public, that seclusion of the more solemn rites was retained from dread and reverence, which was commenced from fear. Though profane curiosity no longer dared to take a hostile character, it was repelled from the sacred ceremony. Of the mingled multitude, Jews and Heathens, the incipient believers, the hesitating converts, who must be permitted to hear the Gospel of Christ or the address of the preacher, none could be admitted to the sacraments. It was natural to exclude them, not merely by regulation and by the artificial division of the church into separate parts, but by the majesty which invested the last solemn rites. That which had concealed itself from fear, became itself fearful; it was no longer a timid mystery which fled the light, but an unapproachable communion with the Deity, which would not brook profane intrusion. It is an extraordinary indication of the power of Christianity, that rites in themselves so simple, and of which the nature, after all the concealment, could not but be known,

¹ "Tot hostes ejus, quot extranei . . . quotidie obsidemur, quotidie prodimur, in ipsis plurimum cœtibus et congregationibus opprimimur." — Tertull. Apologet 7.

should assume such unquestioned majesty ; that, however significant, the simple lustration by water, and the partaking of bread and wine, should so affect the awe-struck imagination, as to make men suppose themselves ignorant of what these sacraments really were, and even when the high-wrought expectations were at length gratified, to experience no dissatisfaction at their plain and in themselves unappalling ceremonies. The mysteriousness was no doubt fed and heightened by the regulations of the clergy, and by the impressiveness of the service,¹ but it grew of itself out of the profound and general religious sentiment. The baptistery and the altar were closed against the uninitiate, but if they had been open, men would scarcely have ventured to approach them. The knowledge of the nature of the sacraments was reserved for the baptized ; but it was because the minds of the unbaptized were sealed by trembling reverence, and shuddered to anticipate the forbidden knowledge. The hearers had a vague knowledge of these mysteries floating around them ; the initiate heard it within.² To add to the impressiveness, night was sometimes spread over the Christian as over the Pagan mysteries.³

¹ This was the avowed object of the clergy. "*Catechumenis sacramenta fidelium non produntur, non ideo fit, quod ea ferre non possunt, sed ut ab eis tanto ardentius concupiscantur, quanto honorabilius occultantur.*" — *Augustin. in Johan. 96.* "*Mortaliū generi naturā datum est, ut abstrusa fortius quærat, ut negata magis ambiat, ut tardius adepta plus diligat, et eo flagrantius ametur veritas, quo vel diutius desideratur, vel laboriosius quæritur, vel tardius invenitur.*" — *Claudius Mamert., quoted by Casaubon in Baron. p. 497.*

² The inimitable pregnancy of the Greek language expresses this by two verbs, differently compounded. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his *Procatechesis*, states the catechumens *περιηχέισθαι*, the faithful *ἐννηχέισθαι*, by the meaning of the mysteries.

³ "*Noctu ritus multi in mysteriis pergebantur; noctu etiam initiatio Christianorum inchoabatur.*" — *Casaubon (p. 490), with the quotations subjoined*

At Easter, and at Pentecost,¹ and in some places at the Epiphany, the rite of baptism was administered publicly (that is, in the presence of the faithful) to all the converts of the year, excepting those few instances in which it had been expedient to perform the ceremony without delay, or where the timid Christian put it off till the close of life;² a practice for a long time condemned in vain by the clergy. But the fact of the delay shows how deeply the importance and efficacy of the rite were rooted in the Christian mind. It was a complete lustration of the soul. The neophyte emerged from the waters of baptism in a state of perfect innocence. The dove (the Holy Spirit) was constantly hovering over the font, and sanctifying the waters to the mysterious ablution of all the sins of the passed life. If the soul suffered no subsequent taint, it passed at once to the realms of purity and bliss; the heart was purified; the understanding illuminated; the spirit was clothed with immortality.³ Robed in white, emblematic of spotless

This might have originated in the vigil of Easter being thus prolonged to midnight. It was an old Jewish tradition that the Messiah would come at the Passover at midnight. "Dicamus aliquid, quod forsitan lectori utile sit. *Traditio Judæorum est Christum mediâ nocte venturum in similitudinem Ægyptii temporis, quando Pascha celebratum est, et exterminator venit et Dominus super tabernacula transiit et sanguine agni postes nostrarum frontium consecrati sunt. Unde reor traditionem apostolicam permansisse ut in die vigiliarum paschæ ante noctis dimidium populos dimittere non licet expectantes adventum Christi, et postquam illud tempus transierit, securitate præsumpta festum cunctis agentibus diem.*" — Hieron. in Matt. 24.

¹ At Constantinople, it appears from Chrysostom, baptism did not take place at Pentecost. — Montfaucon, *Diatribæ*, p. 179.

² The memorable example of Constantine may, for a time, not only have illustrated, but likewise confirmed, the practice.

³ Gregory of Nazianzum almost exhausts the copiousness of the Greek language in speaking of baptism: δῶρον καλοῦμεν, χάρισμα, βάπτισμα, κρίσμα, φώτισμα, ὑψιθαλασσίας ἐνδύμα, λουτρον παλιγγενεσίας, σφραγίδα, πᾶν ὅτι τίμωμεν. — Orat. xl. de Baptism.

Almost all the Fathers of this age — Basil, the two Gregories, Ambrose

purity,¹ the candidate approached the baptistery, in the larger churches a separate building. There he uttered the solemn vows which pledged him to his religion.² The symbolizing genius of the East added some significant ceremonies. The catechumen turned to the West, the realm of Satan, and thrice renounced his power; he turned to the East to adore the Sun of Righteousness,³ and to proclaim his compact with the Lorū of Life. The mystic trinal number prevailed throughout; the vow was threefold, and thrice pronounced. The baptism was usually by immersion: the stripping off the clothes was emblematic of "putting off the old man;" but baptism by sprinkling was allowed, according to the exigency of the case. The water itself became, in the vivid language of the Church, the blood of Christ: it was compared, by a fanciful analogy, to the Red Sea: the daring metaphors of some of the Fathers might seem to assert a transmutation of its color.⁴

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper imperceptibly acquired the solemnity, the appellation, of a sacrifice. The poetry of devotional language Eucharist. kindled into the most vivid and realizing expressions of awe and adoration. No imagery could be too bold, no words too glowing, to impress the soul more pro-

(De Sacram), Augustine — have treatises on baptism, and vie, as it were, with each other in their praises of its importance and efficacy.

¹ Unde parens sacro ducit de fonte sacerdos
Infantes niveos corpore, corde, habitu.

Paulin. ad Sever.

² Chrysostom, in two places, gives the Eastern profession of faith, which was extremely simple: "I renounce Satan, his pomp and worship, and am united to Christ. I believe in the resurrection of the dead." See references in Montfaucon, *ubi supra*.

³ Cyril. Catech. Mystag. Hieronym. in Amos vi. 14.

⁴ "Unde rubet Baptismus Christi, nisi Christi sanguine consecratur." — Augustin. Tract. in Johan. Compare Bingham, xi. 10, 4.

foundly with the sufferings, the divinity, the intimate union of the Redeemer with his disciples. The invisible presence of the Lord, which the devout felt within the whole church, but more particularly in its more holy and secluded part, was gradually concentrated, as it were, upon the altar. The mysterious identification of the Redeemer with the consecrated elements was first felt by the mind, till, at a later period, a material and corporeal transmutation began to be asserted: that which the earlier Fathers, in their boldest figure, called a bloodless sacrifice, became an actual oblation of the body and blood of Christ. But all these fine and subtle distinctions belong to a later theology. In the dim vagueness, in the ineffable and inexplicable mystery, consisted much of its impressiveness on the believer, the awe and dread of the uninitiate.

These sacraments were the sole real mysteries: their nature and effects were the hidden knowledge which was revealed to the perfect alone.¹ In Alexandria, where the imitation or rivalry of the ancient mysteries, in that seat of the Platonic learning, was most likely to prevail, the catechetical school of Origen attempted to form the simpler truths of the Gospel into a regular and progressive system of development.² The works

¹ "Quid est quod occultum est et non publicum in Ecclesiâ, Sacramentum Baptismi, Sacramentum Eucharistiæ. Opera nostra bona vident et Pagani, Sacramenta vero occultantur illis." — Augustin., in Psalm 103. Ordination appears to have been a secret rite. — Casaubon, p. 495. Compare this treatise of Casaubon, the fourteenth of his *Exercitationes Anti-Baronianæ*, which, in general, is profound and judicious.

² Upon this ground rests the famous *Disciplina Arcani*, that esoteric doctrine, within which lurked every thing which later ages thought proper to dignify by the name of the traditions of the Church. This theory was first fully developed by Schelstrate, "*De Disciplinâ Arcani*," and is very clearly stated in Pagi, sub Ann. 118. It rests chiefly on a passage of Origen (*contra Cels.* i. 7), who, after asserting the publicity of the main doctrines of Christianity, the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of Christ, and the general resurrection to judgment, admits that Christianity, like philosophy, had some

of Clement of Alexandria were progressive, addressed to the Heathen, the catechumen, the perfect Christian. But the doctrine which was there reserved for the initiate had a strange tinge of Platonic mysticism. In the Church in general, the only esoteric doctrine, as I have said, related to the Sacraments. After the agitation of the Trinitarian question, there seems to have been some desire to withdraw that holy mystery likewise from the gaze of the profane, which the popular tumults, the conflicts between the Arians and Athanasians of the lowest orders, in the streets of Constantinople and Alexandria, show to have been by no means successful. The apocalyptic hymn, the Trisagion, makes a part indeed of all the older liturgies, which belong to the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century. Even the simple prayer of our Lord, which might seem appropriate to universal man, and so intended by the Saviour himself, was considered too holy to be uttered by unbaptized lips. It was said that none but the baptized could properly address the Almighty as his Father.¹

That care which Christianity had assumed over the whole life of man, it did not abandon after death. In that solemn season, it took in Christian funerals. charge the body, which, though mouldering into dust, was to be revived for the resurrection. The respect and honor which human nature pays to the remains of the dead, and which, among the Greeks especially, had a strong religious hold upon the feelings, was still more profoundly sanctified by the doctrines and usages of Christianity. The practice of inhumation which

secret and esoteric doctrines. Pagi argues, that, as the Trinity was not among the public, it must have been among the esoteric tenets. There is no real ground for it.

¹ Bingham, i. 4, 7, and x. 5, 9.

prevailed in Egypt and Syria, and in other parts of the East, was gradually extended over the whole Western world, by Christianity.¹ The funeral pyre went out of use; and the cemeteries, which from the earliest period belonged to the Christians, were gradually enlarged for the general reception, not of the ashes only in their urns, but for the entire remains of the dead. The Eastern practice of embalming was so general,² that Tertullian boasts that the Christians consumed more of the merchandise of Sabæa in their interments than the Heathens in their fumigations before the altars of their gods.³ The general tone of the simple inscriptions spoke of death but as a sleep; "he sleeps in peace" was the common epitaph: the very name of the enclosure, the *cemetery*, implied the same trust in its temporary occupancy; those who were committed to the earth only awaited the summons to a new life.⁴

¹ "Nec, ut creditis, ullum damnum sepulturæ timemus, sed veterem et meliorem consuetudinem humandi frequentamus." The speaker goes on, in very elegant language, to adduce the analogy of the death and revival of nature: "Expectandum etiam nobis corporis ver est." — Minuc. Fel., edit. Ouzel, p. 327.

During the time of the plague in Alexandria and Carthage, the Christians not only buried their own dead, but likewise those of the Pagans. — Dion. Alex. apud Euseb. Hist. vii. 22. Pontius, in *Vitâ Cypriani*. Compare a curious essay in the *Vermischte Schriften* of Böttiger, iii. 14. *Verbrennen oder Beerdigen*.

² Titulumque et frigida saxa
Liquido spargemus odore.

Prudent. Hym. de Exeq.

Martyris hi tumulum studeant perfundere nardo;
Et medicata pio referant unguenta sepulcro.

Paul. Nol. in Nat. S. Fel.

³ Apologet. c. 42. Boldetti affirms that these odors were plainly perceptible on opening some of the Christian cemeteries at Rome. See Mamachi, *Costumi dei Christiani*, iii. p. 83. The judge, in the Acts of Tarachus (Ruinar, p. 385), says, "You expect that your women will bury your body with ointments and spices."

⁴ Hinc maxima cura sepulchris
Impenditur, hinc resolutos

Gradually the cemetery was, in some places, closely connected with the church. Where the rigid interdict against burying within the walls of cities was either inapplicable or not enforced, the open court before the church became the place of burial.¹

Christian funerals began early in their period of security and opulence to be celebrated with great magnificence. Jerome compares the funeral procession of Fabiola to the triumphs of Camillus, Scipio, or Pompey. The character of this female, who founded the first hospital in Rome, and lavished a splendid fortune in alms-giving, may have mainly contributed to the strong interest excited by her interment. All Rome was poured forth. The streets, the windows, the tops of houses, were crowded with spectators. Processions of youths and of old men preceded the bier, chanting the praises of the deceased. As it passed, the churches were crowded, and psalms were sung, and their golden roofs rang with the sublime Alleluia.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body deepened the common and natural feeling of respect for the remains of the dead :² the worship of the

Worship of
the martyrs.

Honor ultimus accipit artus

Et funeris ambitus ornat.

Quid nam tibi saxa cavata,

Quid pulchra volunt monumenta?

Res quod nisi creditur illis

Non mortua, sed data somno.

Prudent. in Exeq. Defunct.

¹ There is a law of Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius, forbidding burial, or the deposition of urns (which shows that cremation was still common), within the walls of Constantinople, even within the cemeteries of the apostles or martyrs. — Cod. Theod. ix. 17. 6.

² In one of the very curious essays of M. Raoul Rochette, *Mémoires de l'Académie*, he has illustrated the extraordinary care with which the Heathen buried, along with the remains of the dead, every kind of utensil, implement of trade down to the dolls of children; even food, and knives and forks. This

relics of saints and martyrs still farther contributed to the same effect. If the splendid but occasional ceremony of the apotheosis of the deceased emperor was exploded, a ceremony which, lavished as it frequently had been on the worst and basest of mankind, however it might amuse and excite the populace, could not but provoke the contempt of the virtuous; in the Christian world, a continual, and in some respects more rational, certainly more modest, apotheosis was constantly celebrated. The more distinguished

appears from all the tombs which are opened, from the most ancient Etruscan to the most modern Heathen sepulchres. "Il y avait là une notion confuse et grossière sans doute de l'immortalité de l'âme, mais il s'y trouvait aussi la preuve sensible et palpable de cet instinct de l'homme, qui répugne à l'idée de la destruction de son être, et qui y résiste de toutes les forces de son intelligence et de toutes les erreurs même de la raison." — p. 689. But it is a more remarkable fact, that the Christians long adhered to the same usages, notwithstanding the purer and loftier notions of another life bestowed by their religion. "La première observation qui s'offre à Boldetti lui-même et qui devra frapper tous les esprits, c'est qu'en décorant les tombeaux de leurs frères de tant d'objets de pur ornement, ou d'usage réel, les Chrétiens n'avaient pu être dirigés que par ce motif d'espérance qui leur faisait considérer le tombeau comme un lien de passage, d'où ils devaient sortir avec toutes les conditions de l'immortalité, et la mort, comme un *sommeil paisible*, au sein duquel il ne pouvait leur être indifférent de se trouver environnés des objets qui leur avaient été chers durant la vie ou de l'image de ces objets." — tom. xiii. p. 692.

The Heathen practice of burying money, sometimes large sums, with the dead, was the cause of the very severe laws against the violations of the tombs. In fact, these treasures were so great as to be a source of revenue, which the government was unwilling to share with unlicensed plunderers. "Et si aurum, ut dicitur, vel argentum fuerit tuâ indagatione detectum, compendio publico fideliter vindicabis, ita tamen ut abstineatis a cineribus mortuorum. *Ædificia tegant cineres, columnæ vel marmora ornent sepulcra: talenta non teneant, qui commercia virorum reliquerunt. Aurum enim justè sepulcro detrahitur, ubi dominus non habetur; imò culpæ genus est inutiliter addita relinquere mortuorum, unde se vita potest sustentare viventium.*" Such are the instructions of the minister of Theodoric. — Cassiod. Var. iv. 34.

But it is still more strange, that the Christians continued this practice, particularly of the piece of money in the mouth, which the Heathen intended for the payment of Charon. It continued to the time of Thomas Aquinas, who, according to M. R. Rochette, wrote against it.

Christians were dismissed, if not to absolute deification, to immortality, to a state, in which they retained profound interest in, and some influence over, the condition of men. During the perilous and gloomy days of persecution, the reverence for those who endured martyrdom for the religion of Christ had grown up out of the best feelings of man's improved nature. Reverence gradually grew into veneration, worship, adoration. Although the more rigid theology maintained a marked distinction between the honors shown to the martyrs and that addressed to the Redeemer and the Supreme Being, the line was too fine and invisible not to be transgressed by excited popular feeling. The Heathen writers constantly taunt the Christians with the substitution of the new idolatry for the old. The charge of worshipping dead men's bones and the remains of malefactors, constantly recurs. A Pagan philosopher, as late as the fourth century, contemptuously selects some barbarous names of African martyrs, and inquires whether they are more worthy objects of worship than Minerva or Jove.¹

The festivals in honor of the martyrs were avowedly instituted, or at least conducted on a sumptuous scale, in rivalry of the banquets which
Festivals.
 formed so important and attractive a part of the Pagan ceremonial.² Besides the earliest Agapæ, which gave

¹ "Quis enim ferat Jovi fulmina vibranti præferri Mygdonem; Junoni, Minervæ, Veneri, Vestæque Sanaem, et cunctis (prò nefas) Diis immortalibus archimartyrem Nymphanionem, inter quos Lucitas haud minore cultu suscipitur atque alii interminato numero; Diisque hominibusque odiosa nomina." See Augustin., Epist. xvi. p. 20.

² "Cum factâ pace, turbæ Gentilium in Christianum nomen venire cupientes, hoc impedirentur, quod dies festos cum idolis suis solerent in abundantia epularum et ebrietate consumere, nec faciliè ab his perniciosissimis et tam vetustissimis voluptatibus se possent abstinere, visum fuisse majoribus res-

place to the more solemn Eucharist, there were other kinds of banquets, at marriages and funerals, called likewise Agapæ;¹ but those of the martyrs were the most costly and magnificent. The former were of a more private nature; the poor were entertained at the cost of the married couple or the relatives of the deceased. The relationship of the martyrs extended to the whole Christian community, and united all in one bond of piety. They belonged, by a new tie of spiritual kindred, to the whole Church.

By a noble metaphor, the day of the martyrs' death was considered that of their birth to immortality; and their birthdays became the most sacred and popular festivals of the Church.² At their sepulchres,³ or more frequently, as the public worship became more costly, in stately churches erected either over their sepulchres, or in some more convenient situation, but dedicated to their honor, these holy days commenced with the most impressive religious service. Hymns were sung in their praise (much of the early Christian poetry was composed for these occasions); the history

tris, ut huic infirmitatis parti interim parceretur, diesque festos, post eos, quos relinquebant, alios in honorem sanctorum martyrum vel non simili sacrelegio, quamvis simili luxu celebrarent." — Augustin., Epist. xxix. p. 52.

¹ Gregory Nazianzen mentions the three kinds:—

Οἱδ' ἱερὴν ἐπὶ δαῖτα γενέθλιον, ἥ ἐθ' ἀνόντος,

Ἡ τινα νυμφιδίην σὺν πλεονέσσει θέων.—Carm. x.

² *Γενέθλια, natalitia.* This custom was as early as the time of Polycarp. The day of his martyrdom was celebrated by the Church of Antioch. — Euseb. lib. iv. 15. Compare Suicer, in voce *γενέθλιον*. Tertullian instances the offerings for the dead, and the annual celebration of the *birthdays* of the martyrs as of apostolic tradition. "Oblationes pro defunctis, in natalibus annuâ die facimus." — De Coron. Mil. c. 2. Compare Exhortat. ad Cast. c. 11. In the treatise De Monogamiâ, he considers it among the sacred duties of a faithful widow, "offert annuis diebus dormitionis ejus."

³ At Antioch, the remains of St. Juveninus and St. Maximinus were placed in a sumptuous tomb, and honored with an annual festival. — Theodoret, E. H. iii. 15

of their lives and martyrdoms was read¹ (the legends which grew up into so fertile a subject for Christian mythic fable); panegyric orations were delivered by the best preachers.² The day closed with an open banquet, in which all the worshippers were invited to partake. The wealthy Heathens had been accustomed to propitiate the Manes of their departed friends by these costly festivals; the banquet was almost an integral part of the Heathen religious ceremony. The custom passed into the Church; and, with the Pagan feeling, the festival assumed a Pagan character of gayety and joyous excitement, and even of luxury.³ In some places, the confluence of worshippers was so great, that, as in the earlier and indeed the more modern religions of Asia, the neighborhood of the more celebrated churches of the martyrs became marts for commerce, and fairs were established on those holidays.⁴

¹ The author of the Acts of Ignatius wrote them, in part that the day of his martyrdom might be duly honored. — *Act. Martyr. Ign. apud Cotelierium*, vol. ii. p. 161. Compare *Acta St. Polycarpi*.

² There is a law of Theodosius the Great against selling the bodies of martyrs. — *Cod. Theod. ix. 17, 7.*

³ Lipsius considered these Agapæ derived from the Silicernium of the ancients. — *Ad Tac. Ann. vi. 5.* "Quod illa parentalia superstitioni Gentilium essent similia." Such is the observation of Ambrose apud Augustin. *Conf. vi. 2.* Boldetti, a good Roman Catholic and most learned antiquarian, observes on this and other usages adopted from Paganism, "Fu anchè sentimento de' prelati di chiesa di condescendere con ciò alla debolezza de' convertiti dal Gentilismo, per istaccarli più soavemente dell' antichi superstizioni, non levando loro affetto ma bensì convertendo in buoni i loro divertimenti." — *Osservazioni*, p. 46. Compare Marangoni's work, *Dei Cose Gentilesche*.

⁴ Already had the Montanist asceticism of Tertullian taken alarm at the abuse of the earlier festival, which had likewise degenerated from its pious use, and with his accustomed vehemence denounced the abuse of the Agapæ among the Catholics. "Apud te Agape in sæculis fervet, fides in culinis calet, spes in ferculis jacet. Sed major his est Agape, quia per hanc adol-

As the evening drew in, the solemn and religious thoughts gave way to other emotions; the wine flowed freely, and the healths of the martyrs were pledged, not unfrequently, to complete inebriety. All the luxuries of the Roman banquet were imperceptibly introduced. Dances were admitted, pantomimic spectacles were exhibited,¹ the festivals were prolonged till late in the evening, or to midnight, so that other criminal irregularities profaned, if not the sacred edifice, its immediate neighborhood.

The bishops had for some time sanctioned these pious hilarities with their presence; they had freely partaken of the banquets, and their attendants were accused of plundering the remains of the feast, which ought to have been preserved for the use of the poor.²

But the scandals which inevitably arose out of these Paganized solemnities awoke the slumbering vigilance of the more serious prelates. The meetings were gradually suppressed: they are denounced, with the

centes tui cum sororibus dormiunt, appendices scilicet gulæ lascivia atque luxuria est. — De Jejun. c. xvii.

There are many paintings in the catacombs representing Agapæ. Raoul Rochette, *Mém. des Inscrit.* p. 141. The author attributes to the Agapæ held in the cemeteries, many of the cups, glasses, &c. found in the catacombs.

¹ Böttiger, in his prologue on the four ages of the drama (*Opera Lat.* p. 326), supposed, from a passage of St. Augustine, that there were scenic representations of the deaths of martyrs. Müller justly observes that the passage does not bear out this inference; and Augustine would scarcely have used such expressions, unless of dances or mimes of less decent kind. “*Sanctum locum invaserat pestilentia et petulantia saltationis; per totam noctem cantabantur nefaria, et cantantibus saltabatur.*” — Augustin. in Natal. Cyprian. p. 311.

² See the poem of Greg. Naz. de Div. Vit. Gener. Jerome admits the gross evils which took place during these feasts, but ascribes them to the irregularities of a youthful people, which ought not to raise a prejudice against the religion, or even against the usage. The bishops were sometimes called *νεκοβίβοι*, feasters on the dead.

strongest condemnation of the luxury and license with which they were celebrated in the church of Antioch, by Gregory of Nazianzum¹ and by Chrysostom. They were authoritatively condemned by a canon of the Council of Laodicea.² In the West, they were generally held in Rome, and in other Italian cities, to a later period. The authority of Ambrose had discountenanced, if not entirely abolished them, in his diocese of Milan.³ They prevailed to the latest time in the churches of Africa, where they were vigorously assailed by the eloquence of Augustine. The Bishop of Hippo appeals to the example of Italy and other parts of the West, in which they had never prevailed, and in which, wherever they had been known, they had been suppressed by common consent. But Africa did not surrender them without a struggle. The Manichean Faustus, in the ascetic spirit of his sect, taunts the orthodox with their idolatrous festivals. "You have but substituted your Agapæ for the sacrifices of the Heathen; in the place of their idols you have set up your martyrs, whom you worship with the same ceremonies as the Pagans their gods. You appease the Manes of the dead with wine and with meat-offerings." The answer of Augustine indignantly repels the charge of idolatry, and takes refuge in the subtle distinction in the nature of the worship offered to the martyrs. "The reverence paid to martyrs is the same with that offered to holy men in this life, only offered more freely, because they have finally triumphed in their conflict. We adore God alone, we offer sacrifice to no martyr, or to the soul of any saint, or to any angel. . . .

¹ Carm. cexviii., cexix., and Oratio vi. Chrysostom, Hom. in. S. M. Julian.

² Conc. Harduin. t. i. p. 786.

³ Ambros. de Jejun. c. xvii. Augustin. Confessiones vi. 2; see likewise Augustin. Epist. xxii. p. 28

Those who intoxicate themselves by the sepulchres of the martyrs are condemned by sound doctrine. It is a different thing to approve, and to tolerate till we can amend. The discipline of Christians is one thing: the sensuality of those who thus indulge in drunkenness and the infirmity of the weak is another."¹

So completely, however, had they grown into the habits of the Christian community, that in many places they lingered on in obstinate resistance to the eloquence of the great teachers of Christianity. Even the councils pronounced with hesitating and tardy severity the sentence of condemnation against these inveterate usages, to which the people adhered with such strong attachment. That of Carthage A.D. 397. prohibited the attendance of the clergy, and exhorted them to persuade the people, as far as possible, to abstain from these festivals; that of A.D. 533. Orleans condemns the singing, dancing, or dissolute behavior, in churches; that of Agde (Sens) A.D. 578. condemns secular music, the singing of women, and banquets, in that place of which "it is written that it is a house of prayer;" finally, that in Trullo, held at Constantinople, as late as the beginning of the eighth century, prohibits the decking of tables in churches (the prohibition indicates the

¹ Cont. Faust. lib. xx. c. xxi. One of the poems of St. Paulinus of Nola describes the general concourse to these festivals, and the riots which arose out of them.

Et nunc ecce frequentes
Per totam et vigiles extendunt gaudia noctem,
Lætitia somnos, tenebras funalibus arcent.
Verum utinam sanis agerent hæc gaudia votis,
Nec sua liminibus miscerent gaudia sanctis.
. . . ignoscenda tamen puto talia parcis
Gaudia quæ ducant epulis, quia mentibus error
Irrepat rudibus, nec tantæ conscia culpæ
Simplicitas pietate cadit, male credula Sanctos
Perfusus halante mero gaudere sepulcris.

Carmen ix. in St. Felicem Martyrem.

practice): and at length it provoked a formal sentence of excommunication.¹

¹ It is high time that the catacombs should be withdrawn from the domain of Polemics, and, if not of Poetry, of Romance, to that of sober History. According to the language of many modern writers, it would be supposed that for the first three centuries the catacombs were the ordinary dwellings, the only places of divine worship, for the Christians of Rome. A noble author, never to be mentioned without respect, writes about a whole population living in these dens and caves of the earth (Lord Lindsay, "Christian Art," i. pp. 4, 5). Even M. de Pressensé writes of the Church of the Catacombs (i. 367). Cardinal Wiseman, though he has prudently laid the scene of his romance in the time of Diocletian, leads to the inference that those days represent the ordinary life of the Roman Christians of the first three centuries. It is assumed or insinuated that the whole period was a continuous persecution; that the Christians were (*lucifugæ*) obliged to shroud themselves from the eye of day; to conceal their ordinary worship and their mysteries alike under the earth. It might be supposed that Dodwell's unanswered and unanswerable Treatise de Paucitate Martyrum had never been written. In truth, there was no general persecution of the Christians in Rome, from the reign of Nero, A.C. 65, to that of Decius, 249-251. During that period, the Christians were in general as free and secure as other inhabitants of Rome. Their assemblies were no more disturbed than the synagogues of the Jews, or the rites of other foreign religions. How much earlier, we know not, but we know that they had churches in the reign of Alexander Severus. The first martyr-pope, after apostolic times, was Fabianus, in the reign of Decius. From this first terrible but brief onslaught under Decius, in which Cornelius, the successor of Fabianus, also perished, to the general and more merciless persecution under Diocletian and Galerius (A.C. 303), there were periods of local and very barbarous trial in many parts of the empire; the Roman Christians may not have escaped in the times of Claudius and Aurelian: but of any Roman persecution there is no trustworthy record; nor of any martyr-pope. Though it may have been occasionally interrupted, the public worship of Christ disdained concealment, lurked not in secret places, but confronted authority, and asserted its privilege of Roman citizenship.

No doubt from the profound reverence for the dead (deepened by the belief in perhaps the speedy resurrection of the body), there were, in all the catacombs, what we may call mortuary chapels (one has been found in one of the Jewish catacombs), in which some funeral ceremony was performed; and to which the bereaved Christian would resort to mourn over the remains of the parent, the wife or husband, or the child, prematurely laid to rest. Sorrow would find its consolation in prayer. Natural grief, the quiet assurance of the peace in which the departed slept; the hope, the confidence, in their immortality, — all which the submissive, or rather rejoicing faith expresses so simply and so beautifully in all the earlier epitaphs, — would lead to the more devout worship of God in these holy places. Nor would that be

But notwithstanding all its efforts to divert and pre-
 occupy the mind by these graver or at least
 primarily religious spectacles, the passion for
 theatrical amusements was too strong to be repressed
 by Christianity. It succeeded in some humane im-
 provements, but, in some parts, it was obliged to yield
 to the ungovernable torrent. The populace of an
 empire threatened on all sides by dangerous enemies,
 oppressed by a remorseless tyranny, notwithstanding
 the remonstrances of a new and dominant religion,
 imperiously demanded, and recklessly enjoyed, their
 accustomed diversions.¹ In some places, that which
 had been a delight became a madness; and it was a
 Christian city which first broke out in sedition and
 insurrection, whose streets ran with blood, from the
 rivalry of two factions in the circus. The Heathen
 world was degenerate even in its diversions. It was
 not the nobler drama of Greece, or even that of
 Rome; neither the stately tragedy, nor even the fine
 comedy of manners, for which the mass of the people

the natural and spontaneous offering of private sorrow alone. The sepulchres of distinguished Christians — distinguished for Christian virtues of holiness and charity — would assemble the sad, but at the same time triumphant, Christians to celebrate the departure of such men from the sinful world, — their departure to their Redeemer, Christ. Out of this reverent sorrow would grow, in times like the Decian persecution, over the graves of martyred bishops, like Fabianus and Cornelius, or in the more terrible persecution under Diocletian, that which in later times became the worship of the martyrs themselves. By the time of Jerome, this worship had become more common. To visit the tombs of the martyrs became a kind of pilgrimage. It is but in the course of things that martyr-worship multiplied the martyrs; till, after centuries, the whole line of popes which are now deduced from St. Peter, become, according to some not very scrupulous or authentic lists, excepting one unfortunate Greek, honored by this holy title.

¹ In the fifth century, Treves, four times desolated by the barbarians, no sooner recovered its freedom, than it petitioned for the games of the circus. "*Ubique facies captæ urbis, ubique terror captivitatis, ubique imago mortis, jacent reliquæ infelicissimæ plebis super tumulos mortuorum suorum, et tu circenses rogas.*" Compare the whole passage, Salvian, *De Gub. Dei*, vi.

endured the stern remonstrances of the Christian orator; but spectacles of far less intellectual pretensions, and far more likely to be injurious to Christian morals. The higher drama, indeed, was not, as I shall show hereafter, entirely obsolete, but comparatively rare and unattractive.

The Heathen calendar still regulated the amusements of the people.¹ Nearly one hundred days in the year were set apart as festivals; Heathen
calendar the commencement of every month was dedicated to the public diversions. Besides these, there were extraordinary days of rejoicing, a victory, the birthday of the reigning emperor, or the dedication of his statue by the prefect or the provincials of any city or district. On the accession of a new emperor, processions always took place, which ended in the exhibition of games.² The dedication of statues to the emperors by different cities, great victories, and other important events, were always celebrated with games. The Christians obtained a law from Theodosius, that games should be

¹ The ordinary calendar of holidays, on which the courts of law did not sit, at the close of the fourth century, is given by Godefroy (note on the Cod Theodos. lib. ii., viii. 11).

| | |
|---|-------|
| Feriæ æstivæ (harvest) | xxx |
| Feriæ autumnales (vintage). | xxx |
| Kalendæ Januarii | iii |
| Natalitia urbis Romæ | i |
| urbis Constantin. | i |
| Paschæ | xv |
| Dies Solis, ³ circiter | xli |
| Natalitia Imperatorum | iv |
| | <hr/> |
| | cxxv |

Christmas-day, Epiphany, and Pentecost were not as yet general holidays.

² The Constantinian Calendar (Grævii Thesaur. viii.) reckons ninety-six days for the games, of which but few were peculiar to Rome. — Müller, ii p. 49.

³ The other Sundays were comprised in the summer, autumnal, and Easter holidays.

prohibited on the Lord's day. The African bishops, in the fifth Council of Carthage, petitioned that this prohibition might be extended to all Christian holidays. They urged that many members of the corporate bodies were obliged officially to attend on these occasions, and prevented from fulfilling their religious duties. The law of Theodosius the elder had inhibited the celebration of games on Sundays:¹ one of the younger Theodosius added, at Christmas, the Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost, and directed that on those days the theatres should be closed, not only to the Christians, but to the impious Jews and superstitious Pagans.² But, notwithstanding this law, which must have been imperfectly carried into execution, the indignant preachers still denounce the rivalry of the games, which withdrew so many of their audience.³

The Theo-
retica.

The Theoretica, or fund for the expenses of public shows and amusements, which existed not only in the two capitals, but in all the larger cities of the empire, was first confiscated to the imperial treasury by Justinian. Up to that time, the imperial policy had sanctioned and enforced this expenditure; and it is remarkable, that this charge, which had been so long voluntarily borne by the ambition or the vanity of the higher orders, was first imposed as a direct tax on individuals by a Christian emperor. By a law of Constantine, the senate of Rome and of Constantinople were empowered to designate any person of a certain rank and fortune for the costly function of exhibiting games in these two great cities.⁴ These were in addi-

¹ Cod. Theod. xv. v. 2.

² Cod. Theod. xv. t. 5, l. 5, A.D. 425. Müller, p. 50.

³ See, for the earlier period, Apostolic Constit. ii. 60, 61, 62; Theophyl. ad Autolyc. iii. p. 396; for the later, Chrysostom, *pæne passim*, Hom. contra Ant.; Hom. in princip. Act i. 58; Hom. in Johann.

⁴ Zosim. lib. ii. c. 38.

tion to the spectacles exhibited by the consuls. In the other cities, decemvirs were nominated to this office.¹ The only exemptions were nonage, military or civil service, or a special indulgence from the emperor. Men fled from their native cities to escape this onerous distinction. But if the charge was thrown on the treasury, the treasury could recover from the prætor or decemvir, besides assessing heavy fines for the neglect of the duty; and they were liable to be condemned to serve two years instead of one. In the Eastern provinces, this office had been joined with a kind of high-priesthood: such were the Asiarchs, the Syriarchs,² the Bithyniarchs. The most distinguished men of the province had been proud of accepting the station of chief minister of the gods, at the expense of these sumptuous festivities. The office remained under the Christian emperors,³ but had degenerated into a kind of purveyorship for the public pleasures. A law of Theodosius enacted that this office should not be imposed on any one who refused to undertake it.⁴ Another law, from which, however, the Asiarchs

¹ See various laws of Constantius, regulating the office, the expenses, the fines imposed on the prætors; Cod. Theodos. vi. 3; Laws i. 1-33. This shows the importance attached to the office. These munerarii, as well as the actors, were to do penance all their lives.—Act. Conc. Illeb. can. 3. Compare Bingham, xvi. 4, 8. This same council condemned all who took the office of decemvir to a year's exclusion from the communion. — Bingham, *ubi supra*.

² Malala, Chronograph. lib. xii. in art. Codex Theodos. vi. 3, 1.

³ The "tribunus voluptatum" appears as a title on a Christian tomb. — Bosio, Roma Sotteranea, p. 106. Compare the observations of Bosio.

⁴ Cod. Theodos. xii. l. 103. Compare the quotations from Libanius, in Godefroy's Commentary. There is a sumptuary law of Theodosius II. limiting the expenses: "Nec inconsulta plausorum insania curialium vires, fortunas civium, principalium domus, possessorum opes, reipublicæ robur evellant." The Alytarchs, Syriarchs, Asiarchs, and some others, are exempted from this law. — C. T. xv. 9, 2. In Italy, at a later period, the reign of Theodoric, the public games were provided by the liberality of the Gothic sovereign, "Beatitudo sit temporum lætitia populorum." — Cassio-

were excluded, attempted to regulate the expenditure between the mean parsimony of some and the prodigality of others.¹ Those who voluntarily undertook the office of exhibiting games were likewise exempted from this sumptuary law; for there were still some ambitious of this kind of popularity. They were proud of purchasing at this enormous price the honor of seeing their names displayed on tablets to the wondering multitude,² and of being drawn in their chariots through the applauding city on the morning of the festival.

Throughout the empire, this passion prevailed in every city,³ and in all classes. From early morning to late in the evening, the theatres were crowded in every part.⁴ The artisan deserted his work, the merchant his shop, the slaves followed their masters, and were admitted into the vast circuit. Sometimes, when the precincts of the circus or amphitheatre were insufficient to contain the thronging multitudes, the adjacent hills were crowded with spectators, anxious to obtain a glimpse of the distant combatants, or to

dorus, Epist. i. 20. The Epistles of Theodoric's minister are full of provisions and regulations for the celebration of the various kinds of games. — lib. i. epist. 20, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33; iii. 51; iv. 37. Theodoric espoused the green faction; he supported the pantomime. There were still *tribuni voluptatum* at Rome, vi. 6. Stipends were allowed to *scenici*, ix. 21.

¹ Symmachus, lib. x. epist. 28, 42. Compare Heyne, *Opuscula*, vi. p. 14.

² Basil, in Psal. 61. Prudent. *Hamartigenia*.

³ Müller names the following cities, besides the four great capitals, Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria, in which the games are alluded to by ancient authors, — Gortyna, Nicomedia, Laodicea, Tyre, Berytus, Cæsarea, Heliopolis, Gaza, Ascalon, Jerusalem, Berea, Corinth, Cirta, Carthage, Syracuse, Catania, Milan, Aquileia, Ravenna, Mentz, Cologne, Treves, Arles. — p. 53.

⁴ Augustine, indeed, asserts, "per omnes ferè civitates cadunt theatra caveæ turpitudinum, et publicæ professiones flagitiorum." — *De Cons. Evangelist.* c. 51.

ascertain the color of the victorious charioteer. The usages of the East and of the West differed as to the admission of women to these spectacles. In the East, they were excluded by the general sentiment from the theatre.¹ Nature itself, observes St. Chrysostom, enforces this prohibition.² It arose, not out of Christianity, but out of the manners of the East; it is alluded to not as a distinction, but as a general usage.³ Chrysostom laments that women, though they did not attend the games, were agitated⁴ by the factions of the circus.⁴ In the West, the greater freedom of the Roman women had long asserted and still maintained this privilege.⁵ It is well known, that the Vestal virgins had their seats of honor in the Roman spectacles, even those which might have been supposed most repulsive to feminine gentleness and delicacy; and the Christian preachers of the West remonstrate as strongly against the females as against the men, on account of their inextinguishable attachment to the public spectacles.

The more austere and ascetic Christian teachers condemned alike all these popular spectacles. From the avowed connection with Paganism, as to the time

¹ There are one or two passages of the Fathers opposed to this opinion. Tatian says, τοὺς ὅπως δεῖ μοιχεύειν ἐπὶ τῆς σκῆνης σοφιστεύοντας αἱ θυγατέρες ὑμῶν καὶ οἱ παῖδες θεωροῦσι. — c. 22. Clemens Alex. Strom. lib. iii.

² Chrys. Hom. 12 in Coloss. vol. ii. p. 417.

³ Procop. de Bell. Pers. l. c. 42.

⁴ It was remarked as an extraordinary occurrence, that, on the intelligence of the martyrdom of Gordius, matrons and virgins, forgetting their bashfulness, rushed to the theatre. — Basil, vol. ii. p. 144, 147.

⁵ "Quæ pudica forsitan ad spectaculum matrona processerat, de spectaculo revertitur impudica." — Ad Donat. Compare Augustine, de Civ. Dei, ii. 4. "Quid juvenes aut virgines faciant, cum hæc et fieri sine pudore, et spectari libenter ab omnibus cernunt, admonentur, quid facere possent, inflammantur libidines, ac se quisque pro sexu in illis imaginibus præfiguratur, corruptiores ad cubacula revertuntur." — Lact. Div. Instit. xv. 6. 31.

of their celebration,¹ their connection with the worship of Pagan deities, according to the accredited notion that all these deities were demons permitted to delude mankind, the theatre was considered a kind of temple of the Evil Spirit.² There were some, however, who openly vindicated these public exhibitions, and alleged the chariot of Elijah, the dancing of David, and the quotations of St. Paul from dramatic writers, as cases in point.

These public spectacles were of four kinds, independent of the common and more vulgar exhibitions, juggling, rope-dancing, and tumbling.³

I. The old gymnastic games. The Olympic games survived in Greece till the invasion of Alaric.⁴ Antioch likewise celebrated this quinquennial festivity; youths of station and rank exhibited themselves as boxers and wrestlers. These games were also retained at Rome and in parts of Africa;⁵ it is

¹ "Dubium enim non est, quod lædunt Deum, utpote idolis consecrata. Colitur namque et honoratur Minerva in gymnasiis, Venus in theatris, Neptuneus in circis, Mars in arenis, Mercurius in palæstris." — Salvian, lib. vi.

A fair collection of the denunciations of the Fathers against theatrical amusements may be found in Mamachi, de' Costumi de' Primitivi Cristiani, ii. p. 150, *et seqq.*

² See the book *De Spect.*, attributed to St. Cyprian. The author calls Idolatry, "*Ludorum omnium mater.*" "*Quod enim spectaculum sine idolo, quis ludus sine sacrificio (De spectaculis). Ludorum celebrationes deorum festa sunt.*" — Lactant. *Inst. Div.* vi. 20.

³ Compare the references to Chrysostom's works on the rope-dancers, jugglers, &c. in Montfaucon, *Diatrise*, p. 194.

⁴ Liban. *de Vocat. ad Festa Olympiæ.*

*Cuncta Palæmonis manus explorata coronis
Adsit, et Eleo pubes laudata Tonanti.*

Claudian, *de Fl. Mal. Cons.* 288.

This, however, may be poetic reminiscence. These exhibitions are described as conducted with greater decency and order (probably because they awoke less passionate interest) than those of the circus or theatre.

⁵ They were restored in Africa, by a law of Gratian, A.D. 376. — Cod Theod. xv. 7, 3.

uncertain whether they were introduced into Constantinople. The various passages of Chrysostom which allude to them probably were delivered in Antioch. Something of the old honor adhered to the wrestlers and performers in these games: they either were, or were supposed to be, of respectable station and unblemished character. The herald advanced into the midst of the arena, and made his proclamation, "that any man should come forward who had any charge against any one of the men about to appear before them, as a thief, a slave, or of bad reputation."¹

II. Theatrical exhibitions, properly so called. The higher tragedy and comedy were still represented on the inauguration of the consuls at Tragedy and comedy. Rome. Claudian names actors of the sock and buskin, the performers of genuine comedy and tragedy, as exhibiting on the occasion of the consulship of Mallius.² During the triumph of the Christian emperors Theodosius and Arcadius, the theatre of Pompey was filled by chosen actors from all parts of the world. Two actors in tragedy and comedy³ are named as standing in the same relation to each other as the famous Æsopus and the comic Roscius. Prudentius speaks of the tragic mask as still in use; and it appears that females acted those parts in Terence which were formerly represented by men.⁴ The youthful mind of Augustine took delight in being agitated by the fictitious sorrows of the stage.⁵ Nor was this higher

¹ Compare Montfaucon's *Diatrise*, p. 194.

² *Qui pulpita socco*

Personat, aut altè graditur majore cothurno.

In Cons. Mall. 313.

Pompeiana proscenia delectis actoribus personarent.

Symmach. lib. x. ep. 29.

³ Publius Pollio and Ambivius. — *Symmach. Epist. x. 2.*

⁴ Donatus in *Andriam*, act. iv. sc. 3.

⁵ *Confess. iii. 2.*

branch of the art extinct in the East: tragic and comic actors are named, with other histrionic performers, in the orations of Chrysostom,¹ and there are allusions in Libanius to mythological tragic fables and to the comedies of Menander.² But as these representations, after they had ceased to be integral parts of the Pagan worship, were less eagerly denounced by the Christian teachers,³ the comparatively slight and scanty notices in their writings, almost our only records of the manners of the time, by no means prove the infrequency of these representations; though it is probable, for other reasons, that the barbarous and degraded taste was more gratified by the mimes and pantomimes, the chariot races of the circus, and the wild beasts in the amphitheatre.⁴ But tragedy and comedy, at this period, were probably maintained rather to display the magnificence of the consul or prætor, who prided himself on the variety of his entertainments, and were applauded, perhaps,⁵ by professors of rhetoric and a few faithful admirers of antiquity, rather than by the people at large. Some have supposed that the tragedies written on religious subjects in the time of Julian were represented on the stage; but there is

¹ Chrysostom, Hom. 10 in Coloss. v. ii. p. 403; Hom. 6 in Terræ mot. i. 780; i p. 38; i. 731.

² Liban. vol. ii. p. 375.

³ Lactantius inveighs with all the energy of the first ages against tragedy and comedy: "Tragicæ historiæ subjiciunt oculis patricidia et incesta regum malorum, et cothurnata scelera demonstrant. Comicæ de stupris virginum et amicitiiis meretricum, et quo magis sunt eloquentes, eo magis persuadent, facilius inhaerent memoriæ versus numerosi et ornati." — Instit. vi. 20.

⁴ Augustine, however, draws a distinction between these two classes of theatric representations and the lower kind: "Scenicorum tolerabiliora ludorum, comœdiæ scilicet et tragœdiæ, hoc est fabulæ poëtarum, agendæ in spectaculo multâ rerum turpitudine, sed nullâ saltem, sicut aliæ multæ, verborum obscenitate compositæ, quas etiam inter studia, quæ liberalia vocantur pueri legere et discere coguntur a senibus." — De Civ. Dei, lib. ii. c. 8.

⁵ Müller, p. 139.

no ground for this notion: these were intended as school-books, to supply the place of Sophocles and Menander.

In its degeneracy, the higher Drama had long been supplanted by, — 1st, the Mimes. Even this kind of drama, perhaps of Roman or even of Mimes. earlier Italian origin, had degenerated into the coarsest scurrility, and, it should seem, the most repulsive indecency. Formerly it had been the representation of some incident in common life, extemporaneously dramatized by the mime, ludicrous in its general character, mingled at times with sharp or even grave and sententious satire. Such were the mimes of Laberius, to which republican Rome had listened with delight. It was now the lowest kind of buffoonery. The mime, or several mimes, both male and female, appeared in ridiculous dresses, with shaven crowns, and, pretending still to represent some kind of story, poured forth their witless obscenity, and indulged in all kinds of practical jokes and manual wit, blows on the face, and broken heads. The music was probably the great charm; but that had become soft, effeminate, and lascivious. The female performers were of the most abandoned character;¹ and scenes were sometimes exhibited of the most abominable indecency, even if we do not give implicit credit to the malignant tales of Procopius concerning the exhibitions of the empress Theodora, when

¹ Many passages of Chrysostom might be quoted, in which he speaks of the naked courtesans, meaning probably with the most transparent clothing (though women were exhibited at Antioch swimming in an actual state of nudity), who performed in these mimes. The more severe Christian preacher is confirmed by the language of the Heathen Zosimus, whose bitter hatred to Christianity induces him to attribute their most monstrous excesses to the reign of the Christian emperor. *Μίμοι τε γὰρ γελοίων, καὶ οἱ κακῶς ἀπολούμενοι ὀρχησται, καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι πρὸς αἰσχρότητα καὶ τὴν ἀτιμίαν ταύτην καὶ ἐκμελῇ συντελεῖ μουσικῇν, ἡσκήθη τε ἐπὶ τούτου.* — *I. lib. iv. c. 33*

she performed as a dancing girl in these disgusting mimes.¹

2d, The Pantomime was a kind of ballet in action.²
Pantomimes. It was the mimic representation of all the old tragic and mythological fables, without words,³ or intermingled with chants or songs.⁴ These exhibitions were got up at times with great splendor of scenery, which was usually painted on hanging curtains, and with musical accompaniments of the greatest variety. The whole cycle of mythology,⁵ both of the gods and heroes, was represented by the dress and mimic gestures of the performer. The deities, both male and female,—Jupiter, Pluto, and Mars; Juno, Proserpine, Venus; Theseus and Hercules; Achilles, with all the heroes of the Trojan war; Phædra, Briseis, Atalanta; the race of Œdipus,—these are but a few of the dramatic personages which, on the authority of Libanius,⁶ were personated by the pantomimes of the East. Sidonius Apollinaris⁷ fills twenty-five lines with those represented in the West

¹ Müller, 92, 103.

² Libanius is indignant that men should attempt to confound the orchestæ, or pantomimes, with these degraded and infamous mimes. — Vol. iii. p. 350. The pantomimes wore masks: the mimes had their faces uncovered, and usually had shaven crowns.

³ The pantomimi, or dancers, represented their parts:—

Clausis faucibus et loquente gestu
Nutu, crure, genu, manu, rotatu.

Sid. Apoll.

⁴ There was sometimes a regular chorus, with instrumental music (Sid. Apoll. xxiii. 268), and probably poetry composed for the occasion. — Müller, p. 122.

⁵ Greg. Nyssen. in Galland. Bibliothec. Patrum, vi. p. 610. Ambrose, in Hexaem. iii. 1, 5. Synes. de Prov. ii. p. 128, edit. Petav. Symmach. i. ep. 89.

⁶ Liban. pro Salt. v. iii. 391.

⁷ Sidon. Apoll. carm. xxiii. v. 267, 299.

by the celebrated dancers Caramalus and Phabaton.¹ These included the old fables of Medea and Jason, of the house of Thyestes, of Tereus and Philomela, Jupiter and Europa, and Danae, and Leda, and Gany-mede, Mars and Venus, Perseus and Andromeda. In the West, the female parts thus exhibited were likewise represented by women,² of whom there were no less than three thousand in Rome;³ and so important were these females considered to the public amusement, that, on the expulsion of all strangers from the city during a famine, an exception was made by the prætor, in deference to the popular wishes, in favor of this class alone. The profession, however, was considered infamous; and the indecency of their attire upon the public stage justified the low estimate of their moral character. Their attractions were so dangerous to the Roman youth, that a special law prohibited the abduction of these females from their public occupation, whether the enamored lover withdrew one of them from the stage as his mistress, or, as not unfrequently happened, with the more honorable title of wife.⁴ The East, though it sometimes endured the appearance of women in those parts, often left them to be performed by boys, with any thing but advantage to general morality. The aversion of Christianity to the subjects exhibited by the pantomimes, almost invariably moulded up as they were with Paganism, as well as its high moral sense

¹ Claudian mentions a youth, who, before the pit, which thundered with applause:—

Aut rigidam Nioben aut flentem Troada fingit.

² Even in Constantinople, women acted in the pantomimes. Chrysostom (Hom. 6 Thessalon.) denounces the performance of Phædra and Hippolytus by women: *Ὡσπὲρ σώματος τύπῳ φαινόμενας.*

³ Ammian. Marcell. xiv. 6.

⁴ Cod. Theodos. xv. 7, 5.

(united, perhaps, with something of the disdain of ancient Rome for the histrionic art, which it patronized nevertheless with inexhaustible ardor), branded the performers with the deepest mark of public contempt. They were, as it were, public slaves, and could not abandon their profession.¹ They were considered unfit to mingle with respectable society; might not appear in the forum or basilica, or use the public baths; they were excluded even from the theatre as spectators, and might not be attended by a slave, with a folding-stool for their use. Even Christianity appeared to extend its mercies and its hopes to this devoted race with some degree of rigor and jealousy. The actor baptized in the apparent agony of death, if he should recover, could not be forced back upon the stage; but the guardian of the public amusements was to take care, lest, by pretended sickness, the actor should obtain this precious privilege of baptism, and thus exemption from his servitude. Even the daughters of actresses partook of their mothers' infamy, and could only escape being doomed to their course of life by the profession of Christianity, ratified by a certain term of probationary virtue. If the actress relapsed from Christianity, she was invariably condemned to her impure servitude.²

Such was the general state of the theatrical exhibitions in the Roman empire at that period. The higher drama, like every other intellectual and inventive art, had to undergo the influence of Christianity before it could revive in its splendid and prolific energy. In all European countries, the Chris-

¹ Cod. Theodos. xv. 13. Compare Chastel, p. 211, concerning the laws which inflicted dishonor and incapacity on actors.

² Cod. Theodos. de Scenicis, xv. 7, 2, 4, 8, 9.

tian mystery, as it was called, has been the parent of tragedy, perhaps of comedy. It re-appeared as a purely religious representation, having retained no remembrance whatever of Paganism; and was at one period, perhaps, the most effective teacher, in times of general ignorance and total scarcity of books, both among priests and people, of Christian history as well as of Christian legend.¹

But, at a later period, the old hereditary hostility of Christianity to the theatre has constantly revived. The passages of the Fathers have perpetually been repeated by the more severe preachers, whether fairly applicable or not to the dramatic entertainments of different periods; and in general it has had the effect of keeping the actor in a lower caste of society, — a prejudice often productive of the evil which it professed to correct; for men whom the general sentiment considers of a low moral order will rarely make the vain attempt at raising themselves above it; if they cannot avoid contempt, they will care little whether they deserve it.

III. The Amphitheatre, with its shows of gladiators and wild beasts. The suppression of those bloody spectacles, in which human beings slaughtered each other by hundreds for the diversion of their fellow-men, is one of the most unquestionable and proudest triumphs of Christianity. The gladiatorial shows, strictly speaking, — that is, the mortal combats of men, — were never introduced into the less warlike East, though the combats of men with wild beasts were exhibited in Syria and other parts. The former were Roman in their origin, and to their termination. It might seem that the pride of

Amphi-
theatre.
Gladiatorial
shows.

¹ The subject is reviewed in *Latin Christianity*, book xiv. c. 4

Roman conquest was not satisfied with the execution of her desolating mandates, unless the whole city witnessed the bloodshed of her foreign captives; and in her decline she seemed to console herself with these sanguinary proofs of her still extensive empire: the ferocity survived the valor of her martial spirit. Barbarian life seemed, indeed, to be of no account, but to contribute to the sports of the Roman. The humane Symmachus, even at this late period,¹ reproves the *impiety* of some Saxon captives, who, by strangling themselves in prison, escaped the ignominy of this public exhibition.² It is an humiliating consideration to find how little Roman civilization had tended to mitigate the ferocity of manners and of temperament. Not merely did women crowd the amphitheatre during the combats of these fierce and almost naked savages or criminals, but it was the especial privilege of the vestal virgin, even at this late period, to give the signal for the mortal blow, to watch the sword driven deeper into the palpitating entrails.³ The state of uncontrolled frenzy worked up even the most sober spectators. The manner in which this contagious passion for bloodshed engrossed the whole soul is described with singular power and truth by

¹ "Quando prohibuisset privatâ custodiâ desperatæ gentis *impias* manus, cum viginti novem fractas sine laqueo fauces primus ludi gladiatorii diēs viderit." — Symmach. lib. ii. epist. 46.

² It is curious that at one time the exposure to wild beasts was considered a more ignominious punishment than fighting as a gladiator. The slave was condemned to the former for kidnapping; the freeman, to the latter. — Codex Theod. iv. 18, 1.

³ Virgo — consurgit ad ictus,
Et quotiens victor ferrum jugulo inserit, illa
Delicias ait esse suas, pectusque jacentis
Virgo modesta jubet, converso pollice, rumpi;
Ni lateat pars ulla animæ vitalibus imis,
Altius impresso dum palpitât ense secutor.

Prudent. adv. Sym. ii. 1096.

St. Augustine. A Christian student of the law was compelled by the importunity of his friends to enter the amphitheatre. He sat with his eyes closed, and his mind totally abstracted from the scene. He was suddenly startled from his trance by a tremendous shout from the whole audience. He opened his eyes, he could not but gaze on the spectacle. Directly he beheld the blood, his heart imbibed the common ferocity; he could not turn away; his eyes were riveted on the arena; and the interest, the excitement, the pleasure, grew into complete intoxication. He looked on, he shouted, he was inflamed; he carried away from the amphitheatre an irresistible propensity to return to its cruel enjoyments.¹

Christianity began to assail this deep-rooted passion of the Roman world with caution, almost with timidity. Christian Constantinople was never defiled with the blood of gladiators. In the same year as that of the Council of Nicæa, a local edict was issued, declaring the emperor's disapprobation of these sanguinary exhibitions in time of peace, and prohibiting the volunteering of men as gladiators.² This was a considerable step, if we call to mind the careless apathy with which Constantine, before his conversion, had exhibited all his barbarian captives in the amphitheatre at Treves.³ This edict, however, addressed to the Prefect of Phœnicia, had no permanent effect; for Libanius, several years after, boasts that he had not been a spectator of the gladiatorial shows still regularly celebrated in Syria. Constantius prohibited soldiers, and those in the imperial service (*Palatini*), from hiring themselves out to the *Lanistæ*, the keepers of gladia-

¹ August. Conf. vi. 8. ² Codex Theodos. xv. 12, 1.

³ See vol. ii. p. 325

tors.¹ Valentinian decreed that no Christian or Palatine should be condemned for any crime whatsoever to the arena.² An early edict of Honorius prohibited any slave who had been a gladiator³ from being admitted into the service of a man of senatorial dignity. But Christianity now began to speak in a more courageous and commanding tone.⁴ The Christian poet urges on the Christian emperor the direct prohibition of these inhuman and disgraceful exhibitions.⁵ But a single act often affects the public mind much more strongly than even the most eloquent and re-iterated exhortation. An Eastern monk, named Telemachus, travelled all the way to Rome, in order to protest against those disgraceful barbarities. In his noble enthusiasm, he leaped into the arena to separate the combatants: either with the sanction of the prefect, or that of the infuriated assembly, he was torn to pieces, the martyr of Christian humanity.⁶ The impression of this awful scene, of a Christian, a monk, thus murdered in the arena, was so profound, that Honorius issued a prohibitory edict, putting an end to these bloody shows. This edict, however, only suppressed the mortal combats of men:⁷ the less

¹ Codex Theodos. xv. 12, 2. ² Ibid. ix. 40, 8.

³ Codex Theodos. ix. 40, 8. ⁴ Ibid. xv. 12, 3.

⁵ *Arripe dilatam tua, dux, in tempora famam,
Quodque patri superest, successor laudis habeto.
Ille urbem vetuit taurorum sanguine tingi,
Tu mortes miserorum hominum prohibeto litari:
Nullus in urbe cadat, cujus sit poena voluptas,
Nec sua virginitas oblectet cœdibus ora.
Jam solis contenta feris infamis arena,
Nulla oruentatis homicidia ludat in armis.*

Prudent. adv. Sym. ii. 1121.

⁶ Theodoret, v. 26.

⁷ The law of Honorius is not extant in the Theodosian code, which only retains those of Constantine and Constantius. For this reason, doubts have been thrown on the authority of Theodoret; but there is no recorded in-

inhuman, though still brutalizing, conflicts of men with wild beasts seems scarcely to have been abolished¹ till the diminution of wealth, and the gradual contraction of the limits of the empire, cut off both the supply and the means of purchasing these costly luxuries.² The revolted or conquered provinces of the South, the East, and the North, no longer rendered up their accustomed tribute of lions from Libya, leopards from the East, dogs of remarkable ferocity from Scotland, of crocodiles and bears, and every kind of wild and rare animal. The emperor Anthemius prohibited the lamentable spectacles of wild beasts on the Sunday; and Salvian still inveighs against those bloody exhibitions. And this amusement gradually degenerated, if the word may be used, not so much from the improving humanity, as from the pusillanimity of the people. Arts were introduced to irritate the fury of the beast, without endangering the person of the combatant. Such arts would have been contemptuously exploded in the more warlike days of the empire. It became a mere exhibition of skill and agility. The beasts were sometimes tamed before they were exhibited. In the West, those games seem

stance of gladiatorial combats *between man and man* since this period. The passage of Salvian, sometimes alleged, refers to combats with wild beasts. "Ubi summum deliciarum genus est mori homines, aut quod est mori gravius acerbiusque, lacerari, expleri ferarum alvos humanis carnibus, comedi homines cum circumstantium letitiâ, conspicientium voluptate." — De Gub. Dei, lib. vi. p. 51.

¹ Quicquid monstiferis nutrit Gætulia campis,
Alpinâ quicquid tegitur nive, Gallica quicquid
Silva timet, jaceat. Largo ditescat arena
Sanguine, consumant totos spectacula montes.

Claud. in Cons. Mall. 303.

² A law of Honorius provides for the supply of wild beasts for the amphitheatre at Constantinople. It is a very curious provision. — Cr d. Theodos xv. xi. 2.

to have sunk with the Western empire;¹ in the East, they lingered on so as to require a special prohibition by the Council in Trullo at Constantinople, at the close of the seventh century.

IV. The chariot race of the circus. If these former exhibitions were prejudicial to the modesty and humanity of the Roman people, the chariot races were no less fatal to their peace. This frenzy did not, indeed, reach its height till the middle of the fifth century, when the animosities of political and religious difference were outdone by factions enlisted in favor of the rival charioteers in the circus. As complete a separation took place in society; adverse parties were banded against each other in as fierce opposition; an insurrection as destructive and sanguinary took place; the throne of the emperor was as fearfully shaken in the collision of the Blue and Green factions, as ever it had been in defence of the sacred rights of liberty or of faith. Constantinople seemed to concentrate on the circus all that absorbing interest, which at Rome was divided by many spectacles. The Christian city seemed to compensate to itself for the excitement of those games which were prohibited by the religion, by the fury with which it embraced those which were allowed, or rather against which Christianity remonstrated in vain. Her milder tone of persuasiveness, and her more authoritative interdiction, were equally disregarded, where the sovereign and the whole people yielded to the common frenzy. But this consolation remained to Christianity, that, when it was accused of distracting the imperial

¹ Agincourt (*Histoire de l'Art*) is of opinion that Theodoret substituted military games for theatrical shows, and that these military games were the origin of the tournaments. The wild beast shows were still celebrated at Rome. — Cassiod., *Epist.* v. 42.

city with religious dissension, it might allege, that this at least was a nobler subject of difference; or, rather, that the passions of men seized upon religious distinctions with no greater eagerness than they did on these competitions for the success of a chariot driver in a blue or a green jacket, in order to gratify their inextinguishable love of strife and animosity.

CHAPTER III.

Christian Literature.

CHRISTIANITY was extensively propagated in an age in which Greek and Latin literature had fallen into hopeless degeneracy ; nor could even its spirit awaken the dead. Both these languages had already attained and passed their complete development : they had fulfilled their part in the imaginative and intellectual advancement of mankind ; and it seems, in general, as much beyond the power of the genius of a country, as of an individual, to renew its youth. It was not till it had created new languages, or rather till languages had been formed in which the religious notions of Christianity were an elementary and constituent part, that Christian literature assumed its free and natural dignity.

The genius of the new religion never coalesced in perfect and amicable harmony with either the Greek or the Latin tongue. In each case it was a foreign dialect, introduced into a fully formed and completely organized language. The Greek, notwithstanding its exquisite pliancy, with difficulty accommodated itself to the new sentiments and opinions. It had either to endure the naturalization of new words, or to deflect its own terms to new significations. In the latter case, the doctrines were endangered ; in the former, the purity of the language ; more especially since the Oriental writers were in general alien to the Grecian

mind. The Greek language had, indeed, long before yielded to the contaminating influences of Barbarism. From Homer to Demosthenes, it had varied in its style and character, but had maintained its admirable perfection, as the finest, the clearest, and most versatile instrument of poetry, oratory, or philosophy. But the conquests of Greece were as fatal to her language as to her liberties. The Macedonian, the language of the conquerors, was not the purest Greek;¹ and in general, by the extension over a wider surface, the stream contracted a taint from every soil over which it flowed. Alexandria was probably the best school of foreign Grecian style, at least in literature; in Syria it had always been infected in some degree by the admixture of Oriental terms. The Hellenistic style, as it has been called, of the New Testament, may be considered a fair example of the language, as it was spoken in the provinces among persons of no high degree of intellectual culture.

Degeneracy.
Fate of
Greek literature
and
language.

The Latin seemed no less to have fulfilled its mission, and to have passed its culminating point, in the verse of Virgil and the prose of Cicero. Its stern and masculine majesty, its plain and practical vigor, seemed as if it could not outlive the republican institutions, in the intellectual conflicts of which it had been formed. The impulse of the old freedom carried it through the reign of Augustus, but no further; and it had undergone rapid and progressive deterioration before it was called upon to discharge its second office of disseminating and preserving the Christianity of the West; and the Latin, like the

Of Roman.

¹ Compare the dissertation of Sturz on the Macedonian dialect, reprinted in the prolegomena to Valpy's edition of Stephens's Thesaurus.

Greek, had suffered by its own triumphs. Among the more distinguished Heathen writers, subsequent to Augustus, the largest number were of provincial origin; and something of their foreign tone still adhered to their style. Of the best Latin Christian writers, it is remarkable that not one was a Roman, not one, except Ambrose, an Italian. Tertullian, Cyprian, Arnobius (perhaps Lactantius), and Augustine were Africans; the Roman education and superior understanding of the last could not altogether refine away that rude provincialism which darkened the whole language of the others. The writings of Hilary are obscured by another dialect of Barbarism. Even at so late a period, whatever exceptions may be made to the taste of his conceptions and of his imagery, with some limitation, the *Roman* style of Claudian, and the structure of his verse, carries us back to the time of Virgil; in Prudentius, it is not merely the inferiority of the poet, but something foreign and uncongenial refuses to harmonize with the adopted poetic language.¹

Yet it was impossible that such an enthusiasm could be disseminated through the empire, without
Christian literature. in some degree awakening the torpid languages. The mind could not be so deeply stirred, without expressing itself with life and vigor, even if with diminished elegance and dignity. No one can compare the energetic sentences of Chrysostom with the prolix and elaborate, if more correct, periods of Libanius, without acknowledging that a new principle of vitality has been infused into the language.

¹ Among the most remarkable productions as to Latinity are the Ecclesiastical History and Life of St. Martin of Tours, by Sulpicius Severus; the legendary matter of which contrasts singularly with the perspicuous and almost classical elegance of the style. — See *post*, on Minucius Felix.

But, in fact, the ecclesiastical Greek and Latin are new dialects of the ancient tongue. Their literature stands entirely apart from that of Greece or Rome. The Greek already possessed the foundation of this literature in the Septuagint version of the Old, and in the original of the New Testament. The Vulgate of Jerome, which almost immediately superseded the older imperfect or inaccurate versions from the Greek, supplied the same groundwork to Latin Christendom. There is something singularly rich, and, if I may so speak, picturesque, in the Latin of the Vulgate; the Orientalism of the Scripture is blended up with such curious felicity with the idiom of the Latin, that, although far removed either from the colloquial ease of the comic poets or the purity of Cicero, it both delights the ear and fills the mind. It is an original and somewhat foreign, but nevertheless an expressive and harmonious, dialect.¹ It has, no doubt, powerfully influenced the religious style, not merely of the later Latin writers, but those of the modern languages of which Latin is the parent. Constantly quoted, either in its express words, or in terms approaching closely to its own, it contributed to form the dialect of ecclesiastical Latin, which became the religious language of Europe; and, as soon as religion condescended to employ the modern languages in its service, was transfused as a necessary and integral part of that which related to religion. Christian literature was as yet

¹ There appears to me more of the Oriental character in the Old Testament of the Vulgate than in the LXX. That translation having been made by Greeks, or by Jews domiciled in a Greek city, the Hebrew style seems subdued, as far as possible, to the Greek. Jerome seems to have endeavored to Hebraize or Orientalize his Latin.

The story of Jerome's nocturnal flagellation for his attachment to profane literature rests (as we have seen) on his own authority; but his later works show that the offending spirit was not effectively scourged out of him.

purely religious in its scope: though it ranged over the whole field of ancient poetry, philosophy, and history, its sole object was the illustration or confirmation of Christian opinion.

For many ages, and indeed as long as it spoke the ancient languages, the new religion was barren of poetry in all its loftier departments, at least of that which was poetry in form as well as in spirit.

The religion itself was the *poetry* of Christianity. The sacred books were to the Christians what the national epic and the sacred lyric had been to the other races of antiquity. They occupied the place, and proscribed in their superior sanctity, or defied by their unattainable excellence, all rivalry. The Church succeeded to the splendid inheritance of the Hebrew temple and synagogue. The Psalms and the Prophets, if they departed somewhat from their original simple energy and grandeur in the uncongenial and too polished languages of the Greeks and Romans, still, in their imagery, their bold impersonations, the power and majesty of their manner, as well as in the sublimity of the notions of divine power and wisdom with which they were instinct, stood alone in the religious poetry of mankind.

The religious books of Christianity, though of a gentler cast, and only in a few short passages (and in the grand poetic drama of the Revelation) poetical in their form, had much, especially in their narratives, of the essence of poetry; the power of awakening kindred emotions; the pure simplicity of truth, blended with imagery and with language which kindled the fancy. Faith itself was constantly summoning the imagination to its aid, to realize, to

impersonate, those scenes which were described in the sacred volume, and which it was thus enabled to embrace with greater fervor and sincerity. All the other early Christian poetry was pale and lifeless in comparison with that of the sacred writers. Some few hymns, as the noble *Te Deum* ascribed to Ambrose, were admitted, with the Psalms, and the short lyric passages in the New Testament, the *Magnificat*, the *Nunc Dimittis*, and the *Alleluia*, into the services of the Church. But the sacred volume commanded exclusive adoration, not merely by its sanctity, but by its unrivalled imagery and sweetness. Each sect had its hymns; and those of the Gnostics, with the rival strains of the orthodox churches of Syria, attained great popularity. But in general these compositions were only a feebler echo of the strong and vivid sounds of the Hebrew psalms. The epic and tragic form into which, in the time of Julian, the Scripture narratives were cast, in order to provide a Christian Homer and Euripides for those schools in which the originals were interdicted, were probably but cold paraphrases, the Hebrew poetry expressed in an incongruous cento of the Homeric or tragic phraseology. The garrulous feebleness of Gregory's own poem does not awaken any regret for the loss of those writings either of his own composition or of his age.¹ Even in the martyrdoms, the noblest unoccupied subjects for Christian verse, the poetry seems to have forced its way into the legend, rather than animated the

¹ The Greek poetry after Nazianzen was almost silent: some, perhaps, of the hymns are ancient (one particularly in Routh's *Reliquiæ*). See likewise Smith's account of the Greek Church. The hymns of Synesius are very interesting as illustrative of the state of religious sentiment, and by no means without beauty. But may we call these dreamy Platonic raptures Christian poetry?

writer of verse. Prudentius — whose finest lines (and they are sometimes of a very spirited, sententious, and eloquent, if not poetic cast) occur in his other poems — on these, which would appear at first far more promising subjects, is sometimes pretty and fanciful, but scarcely more.¹

¹ One of the best, or rather perhaps *prettiest*, passages is that which has been selected as a hymn for the Innocents' day: —

Salvete flores martyrum
Quos lucis ipso in limine,
Christi insecutor sustulit
Ceu turbo nascentes rosas.
Vos, prima Christi victima,
Grex immolatorum tener,
Aram ante ipsam simplices
Palma et coronis luditis.

But these are only a few stanzas out of a long hymn on the Epiphany. The best verses in Prudentius are to be found in the books against Symmachus; but their highest praise is that, in their force and energy, they *approach* to Claudian. With regard to Claudian, I cannot refrain from repeating what I have stated in another place, as it is so closely connected with the subject of Christian poetry. M. Beugnot has pointed out one remarkable characteristic of Claudian's poetry and of the times, — his extraordinary religious indifference. Here is a poet writing at the actual crisis of the complete triumph of the new religion, and the visible extinction of the old: if we may so speak, a strictly historical poet, whose works, excepting his mythological poem on the rape of Proserpine are confined to temporary subjects, and to the politics of his own eventful times; yet, excepting in one or two small and indifferent pieces manifestly written by a Christian and interpolated among Claudian's poems, there is no allusion whatever to the great religious strife. No one would know the existence of Christianity at that period of the world by reading the works of Claudian. His panegyric and his satire preserve the same religious impartiality; award their most lavish praise or their bitterest invective on Christian or Pagan: he insults the fall of Eugenius, and glories in the victories of Theodosius. Under the child of Theodosius, — and Honorius never became more than a child, — Christianity continued to inflict wounds more and more deadly on expiring Paganism. Are the gods of Olympus agitated with apprehension at the birth of their new enemy? They are introduced as rejoicing at his appearance, and promising long years of glory. The whole prophetic choir of Paganism, all the oracles throughout the world, are summoned to predict the felicity of the reign of Honorius. His birth is compared to that of Apollo; but the narrow limits of an island must not confine the new *deity*, —

Non littora nostro

Sufficerent angusta Deo.

Augury and divination, the shrines of Ammon and of Delphi, the Persian

There is more of the essence of poetry in the simpler and unadorned Acts of the Martyrs, more pathos, oc-

magi, the Etruscan seers, the Chaldaean astrologers, the Sibyl herself, are described as still discharging their poetic functions, and celebrating the natal day of this Christian prince. They are noble lines, as well as curious illustrations of the times: —

Quæ tunc documenta futuri ?

Quæ voces avium ? quanti per inane volatus ?

Quis vatum discursus erat ? Tibi corniger Ammon,

Et dudum taciti rupère silentia Delphi.

Te Persæ cecinère Magi, te sensit Etruscus

Augur, et inspectis Babylonius horruit astris :

Chaldaei stupuère senes, Cumanaque rursus

Intonuit rupes, rabidæ delubra Sibyllæ.

Note on Gibbon, v. 249.

But *Roman* poetry expired with Claudian. In the vast mass of the Christian Latin poetry of this period, independent of the perpetual faults against metre and taste, it is impossible not to acknowledge that the subject matter appears foreign, and irreconcilable with the style of the verse. Christian images and sentiments, the frequent biblical phrases and expressions, are not yet naturalized ; and it is almost impossible to select any passage of considerable length from the whole cycle, which can be offered as poetry. I except a few of the hymns, and even as to the hymns (setting aside the *Te Deum*), paradoxical as it may sound, I cannot but think the later and more barbarous the best. There is nothing in my judgment to be compared with the monkish “*Dies iræ, dies illa,*” or even the “*Stabat Mater.*”

I am inclined to select, as a favorable specimen of Latin poetry, the following almost unknown lines (they are not in the earlier editions of *Dracontius*). I have three reasons for my selection : 1. The real merit of the verses compared to most of the Christian poetry ; 2. Their opposition to the prevailing tenet of celibacy, for which cause they are quoted by Theiner ; 3. The interest which early poetry on this subject (*Adam in Paradise*) must possess to the countrymen of Milton.

“ Tunc oculos per cuncta jacet, miratur amœnum
Sic florere locum, sic puros fontibus amnes,
Quatuor undisonas stringenti gurgite ripas,
Ire per arboreos saltus, camposque virentes
Miratur ; sed quid sit homo, quos factus ad usus
Scire cupit simplex, et non habet, unde requirat ;
Quo merito sibi met data sit possessio mundi,
Et domus alma nemus per florea regna paratum :
Ac procul expectat virides jumenta per agros ;
Et de se tacitus, quæ sint hæc cuncta, requirit,
Et quare secum non sint hæc ipsa, volutat :
Nam consorte carens, cum quo conferret, egebat.
Viderat Omnipotens, hæc illum corde moventem,
Et miseratus ait : Demus adjutoria facto ;
Participem generis : tanquam si diceret auctor,

asionally more grandeur, more touching incident and expression, and even, we may venture to say, happier

*Non solum deest esse virum, consortia blanda
Noverit, uxor erit, quum sit tamen ille maritus,
Conjugium se quisque vocet, dulcedo recurat
Cordibus innocuis, et sit sibi pignus uterque
Velle pares, et nolle pares, stans una voluntas,
Par animi concurs, paribus concurrere votis.
Ambo sibi requies cordis sint, ambo fideles,
Et quicumque datur casus, sit causa duorum
Nec mora, jam venit alma quies, oculosque supinat
Somnus, et in dulcem solvuntur membra soporem.
Sed quum jure Deus, nullo prohibente valeret
Demere particulam, de quo plus ipse pararat,
Ne vi oblata daret juveni sua costa dolorem,
Redderet et tristem subitò, quem lædere nollet,
Fur opifex vult esse suus; nam posset et illam
Pulvere de simili princeps formare puellam.
Sed quo plenus amor toto de corde veniret,
Noscere in uxore voluit sua membra maritum,
Dividitur contexta cutis, subducitur una
Sensim costa viro, sed mox reditura marito.
Nam juvenis de parte brevi formatur adulta
Virgo, decora, rudis, matura tumentibus annis,
Conjugii, sobolisque capax, quibus apta probatur,
Et sine lacte pio crescit infantia pubes.*

*Excutitur somno juvenis, videt ipse puellam
Ante oculos astare suos, pater, inde maritus.
Non tamen ex costâ genitor, sed conjugis auctor.
Somnus erat partus, conceptus semine nullo,
Materiem sopita quies produxit amoris,
Affectusque novos blandi genuere sopores.
Constitit ante oculos nullo velamine tecta,
Corpore nuda simul niveo, quasi nympha profundi,
Cæsaries intonsa comis, gena pulchra rubore,
Omnia pulchra gerens, oculos, os, colla, manusque,
Vel qualem possent digiti formare Tonantis.*

*Nescia mens illis, fieri quæ causa fuisset;
Tunc Deus et princeps ambos conjunxit in unum,
Et remeat sua costa viro; sua membra recepit;
Accipit et fœnus, quum non sit debitor ullus.
His datur omnis humus, et quicquid jussa creavit,
Aëris et pelagi fœtus, elementa duorum,
Arbitrio commissa manent. His, crescite, dixit
Omnipotens, replete solum de semine vestro,
Sanguinis ingenti natos nutritæ nepotes,
Et de prole novos iterum copulate jугales
Et dum terra fretum, dum cœlum sublevat aër,
Dum solis micat axe jubar, dum luna tenebras
Dissipat, et puro lucent mea sidera cœlo;
Sumere, quicquid habent pomaria nostra licebit;*

invention, than in the prolix and inanimate strains of the Christian poet. For the awakened imagination was not content with feasting in silence on its lawful nutriment, the poetry of the Bible: it demanded and received perpetual stimulants, which increased, instead of satisfying, the appetite. That peculiar state of the human mind had now commenced, in which the imagination so far predominates over the other faculties, that truth cannot help arraying itself in the garb of fiction; credulity courts fiction, and fiction believes its own fables. That some of the Christian legends were deliberate forgeries can scarcely be questioned; the principle of pious fraud appeared to justify this mode of working on the popular mind; it was admitted and avowed. To deceive into Christianity was so valuable a service, as to hallow deceit itself. But the largest portion was probably the natural birth of that imaginative excitement which quickens its day-dreams and nightly visions into reality. The Christian lived in a supernatural world: the notion of the divine power, the perpetual interference of the Deity, the agency of the countless invisible beings which hovered over mankind, was so strongly impressed upon the belief, that every extraordinary, and almost every ordinary, incident became a miracle; every inward emotion, a suggestion either of a good or an evil spirit. A mythic period was thus gradually formed, in which reality melted into fable, and invention unconsciously trespassed on

Legends.

Nam totum quod terra creat, quod pontus et aër
 Protulit, addictum vestro sub jure manebit,
 Deliciaeque fluent vobis, et honesta voluptas;
 Arboris unius tantum nescite saporem."

Dracontii Presbyt. Hispani Christ. secul. v. sub Theodos. M. Carmina, a
 F. Arevalo. Romæ, 1791. Carmen de Deo, lib. i. v. 348, 415.

the province of history. This invention had very early let itself loose, in the spurious Gospels, or accounts of the lives of the Saviour and his apostles, which were chiefly, I conceive, composed among, or rather against, the sects which were less scrupulous in their veneration for the sacred books. Unless Antidocetic, it is difficult to imagine any serious object in fictions, in general so fantastic and puerile.¹ This example had been set by some, probably, of the foreign Jews, whose apocryphal books were as numerous and as wild as those of the Christian sectaries. The Jews had likewise anticipated them in the interpolation or fabrication of the Sibylline verses. The fourth book of Esdras, the Shepherd of Hermas,² and other prophetic works, grew out of the Prophets and the book of Revelation, as the Gospels of Nicodemus, and that of the Infancy, and the various spurious acts of the different apostles,³ out of the

¹ Compare what has been said on the Gospel of the Infancy, vol. i. p. 136; though I would now observe that the antiquity of this Gospel is very dubious.

² The Shepherd of Hermas, as Bunsen has well shown, is a kind of ancient Pilgrim's Progress. — Christianity and Mankind, i. 182.

³ Compare the Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti, by J. A. Fabricius, and Jones on the Canon. A more elaborate collection of these curious documents has been commenced (I trust not abandoned) by Dr. Thilo, Lipsiæ, 1832. Of these, by far the most remarkable, in its composition and its influence, was the Gospel of Nicodemus. The author of this work was a poet, and of no mean invention. The latter part, which describes the descent of the Saviour to hell, to deliver "the spirits in prison," according to the hint in the Epistle of St. Peter (1 Peter iii. 19), is extremely striking and dramatic. This "harrowing of hell," as it is called in the old mysteries, became a favorite topic of Christian legend, founded on, and tending greatly to establish the popular belief in, a purgatory, and to open, as it were, to the fears of man the terrors of the penal state. With regard to these spurious Gospels in general, it is a curious question in what manner, so little noticed as they are in the higher Christian literature, they should have reached down, and so completely incorporated themselves, in the dark ages, with the superstitions of the vulgar. They would never have furnished so many subjects to painting, if they had not been objects of popular belief.

Gospels and Acts. The Recognitions and other tracts which are called the Clementina, partake more of the nature of religious romance. Many of the former were obviously intended to pass for genuine records, and must be proscribed as unwarrantable fictions: the latter may rather have been designed to trace, and so to awaken, religious feelings, than as altogether real history. The lives of St. Anthony by Lives of saints. Athanasius, and of Hilarion by Jerome, are the prototypes of the countless biographies of saints; and, with a strong outline of truth, became impersonations of the feeling, the opinions, the belief, of the time. We have no reason to doubt that the authors implicitly believed whatever of fiction embellishes their own unpremeditated fables: the coloring, though fanciful and inconceivable to our eyes, was fresh and living to theirs.

History itself could only reflect the proceedings of the Christian world, as they appeared to that world. We may lament that the annals of History. Christianity found in the earliest times no historian more judicious and trustworthy than Eusebius; the heretical sects no less prejudiced and more philosophical chronicler than Epiphanius: but in them, if not scrupulously veracious reporters of the events and characters of the times, we possess almost all that we could reasonably hope; faithful reporters of the opinions entertained, and the feelings excited by both. Few Christians of that day would not have considered it the sacred duty of a Christian to adopt that principle, avowed and gloried in by Eusebius, but now made a bitter reproach, that he would relate all that was to the credit, and pass lightly over all which was to the

dishonor, of the faith.¹ The historians of Christianity were credulous, but of that which it would have been considered impiety to disbelieve, even if they had the inclination.

The larger part of Christian literature consists in controversial writings, valuable to posterity as records of the progress of the human mind, and of the gradual development of Christian opinions, — at times worthy of admiration for the force, the copiousness, and the subtlety of argument; but too often repulsive from their solemn prolixity on insignificant subjects, and, above all, the fierce, the unjust, and the acrimonious

¹ "In addition to these things (the appointment of rude and unfit persons to episcopal offices, and other delinquencies), the ambition of many; the precipitate and illegitimate ordinations; the dissensions among the confessors; whatever the younger and more seditious so pertinaciously attempted against the remains of the Church, introducing innovation after innovation, and unsparingly, in the midst of the calamities of the persecution, adding new afflictions, and heaping evil upon evil, — all these things I think it right to pass over, as unbecoming my history, which, as I stated in the beginning, declines and avoids the relation of such things. But whatsoever things, according to the Sacred Scripture, are 'honest and of good report:' if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, these things I have thought it most befitting the history of these wonderful martyrs, to speak and to write and to address to the ears of the faithful." On this passage, De Martyr. Palæst. cxii, and that to which it alludes, E. H. viii. 2, the honesty and impartiality of Eusebius, which were not above suspicion in his own day (Tillemont, M. E. tom. i. part i. p. 67), have been severely questioned. Gibbon's observations on the subject gave rise to many dissertations. Müller, *De Fide Euseb. Cæs. Havnæ*, 1813. Danzius, *De Euseb. Cæs. H. E. Scriptore, ejusque Fide Historicâ rectè æstimandâ*. Jenæ, 1815. Kestner, *Comment. de Euseb. H. E. Conditoris Auctoritate et Fide*. See also Reuterdahl, *De Fontibus H. E. Eusebianæ*. Lond. Goth. 1826, and various passages in the *Excursus* of Heinichen. In many passages, it is clear that Eusebius did not adhere to his own rule of partiality. His Ecclesiastical History, though probably highly colored in many parts, is by no means an uniform panegyric on the early Christians. Strict impartiality could not be expected from a Christian writer of that day; and probably Eusebius erred more often from credulity than from dishonesty. Yet the unbelief produced, in later times, by the fictitious character of early Christian History, may show how dangerous, how fatal, may be the least departure from truth. On pious fraud, read Mosheim, *Diss. i. 206, et seqq.*

spirit with which they treat their adversaries. The Christian literature in prose (excluding the history and hagiography) may be distributed under five heads: I. Apologies, or defences of the faith, against Jewish, or more frequently Heathen adversaries. II. Hermeneutics, or commentaries on the sacred writings. III. Expositions of the principles and doctrines of the faith. IV. Polemical works against the different sects and heresies. V. Orations.

I. I have already traced the manner in which the apology for Christianity, from humbly defensive, became vigorously aggressive. The Apologies. calm appeal to justice and humanity, the earnest deprecation of the odious calumnies with which the Christians were charged, the plea for toleration, gradually rise to the vehement and uncompromising proscription of the folly and guilt of idolatry. Tertullian marks, as it were, the period of transition; though his fiery temper may perhaps have anticipated the time when Christianity, in the consciousness of strength, instead of endeavoring to appease or avert the wrath of hostile Paganism, might defy it to deadly strife. The earliest extant apology, that of Justin Martyr, is by no means severe in argument or vigorous in style, and though not altogether abstaining from recrimination, is still rather humble and deprecatory in its tone. The short apologetic orations — as the Christians had to encounter not merely the general hostility of the Government or the people, but direct and argumentative treatises, written against them by the philosophic party — gradually swelled into books. The first of these is perhaps the best, — that of Origen against Celsus. The intellect of Origen, notwithstanding its occasional fantastic aberrations, appears to me

more suited to grapple with this lofty argument than the diffuse and excursive Eusebius, whose Evangelic Preparation and Demonstration heaped together vast masses of curious but by no means convincing learning; and the feebler, more violent, and less candid Cyril of Alexandria, in his Books against Julian. I have already noticed the great work which perhaps might be best arranged under this head, the "City of God" of St. Augustine; but there was one short treatise which may vindicate the Christian Latin literature from the charge of barbarism; perhaps no late work, either Pagan or Christian, reminds us of the golden days of Latin prose so much as the Octavius of Minucius Felix.

II. The Hermeneutics, or the interpretation of the sacred writers, might be expected to have more real value and authority than can be awarded them by sober and dispassionate judgment. But it cannot be denied, that almost all these writers, including those of highest name, are fanciful in their inferences, discover mysteries in the plainest sentences, wander away from the clear historical, moral, or religious meaning, into a long train of corollaries, at which we arrive we know not how. Piety, in fact, read in the Scripture whatever it chose to read; and the devotional feeling it excited was at once the end and the test of the biblical commentary. But the character of the age and the school in which the Christian teachers were trained, must here, as in other cases, be taken into account. The more sober Jewish system of interpretation (setting aside the wild cabalistic notions of the significance of letters, the frequency of their recurrence, their collocation, and all those strange theories which were engendered by a servile veneration

Hermeneu-
tics.

of the very form and language of the sacred writings) allowed itself at least an equal latitude of authoritative inference. The Platonists spun out the thoughts or axioms of their master into as fine and subtle a web of mystic speculation. The general principle of an esoteric or recondite meaning in all works which commanded veneration, was universally received: it was this principle upon which the Gnostic sects formed all their vague and mystic theories; and, if in this respect the Christian teachers did not bind themselves by much severer rules of reasoning than prevailed around them on all sides, they may have been actuated partly by some jealousy, lest their own plainer and simpler sacred writings should appear dry and barren, in comparison with the rich and imaginative freedom of their adversaries.

III. The expositions of faith and practice may comprehend all the smaller treatises on particular duties, — prayer, almsgiving, marriage, and celibacy. They depend, of course, for their merit and authority on the character of the writer.

Expositions
of faith.

IV. Christianity might appear, if we judge by the proportion which the controversial writings bear to the rest of Christian literature, to have introduced an element of violent and implacable discord. Nor does the tone of these polemical writings, by which alone we can judge of the ancient heresies, of which the heretics' own accounts have almost entirely perished, impress us very favorably with their fairness or candor. But it must be remembered, that, after all, the field of literature was not the arena in which the great contest between Christianity and the world was waged: it was in the private circle of each separate congregation, which was constantly but silently en-

Polemical
writings.

larging its boundaries ; it was the immediate contact of mind with mind, the direct influence of the Christian clergy and even the more pious of the laity, which were tranquilly and noiselessly pursuing their course of conversion.¹

These treatises, however, were principally addressed to the clergy, and through them worked downward into the mass of the Christian people: even with the more rapid and frequent communication which took place in the Christian world, they were but partially and imperfectly disseminated ; but that which became another considerable and important part of their literature, their oratory, had in the first instance been directly addressed to the popular mind, and formed the chief part of the popular instruction. Christian preaching had opened a new field for eloquence.

V. Oratory, that oratory at least which communicates its own impulses and passions to the heart, which not merely persuades the reason, but sways the whole soul of man, had suffered a long and total silence. It had everywhere expired with the republican institutions. The discussions in the senate had been controlled by the imperial presence ; and even if the Roman senators had asserted the fullest freedom of speech, and allowed themselves the most exciting fervor of language, this was but one assembly

Christian
oratory.

¹ I might perhaps have made another and a very interesting branch of the prose Christian literature, — the epistolary. The letters of the great writers form one of the most valuable parts of their works. The Latin Fathers, however, maintain that superiority over the Greek, which in classical times is asserted by Cicero and Pliny. The letters of Cyprian and Ambrose are of the highest interest as historical documents ; those of Jerome, for manners ; those of Augustine, perhaps, for style. They far surpass those of Chrysostom, which we must, however, recollect were written from his dreary and monotonous place of exile. Yet Chrysostom's are superior to that dulllest of all collections, — the huge folio of the letters of Libanius

in a single city, formed out of a confined aristocracy. The municipal assemblies were alike rebuked by the awe of a presiding master, the provincial governor, and of course afforded a less open field for stirring and general eloquence. The perfection of jurisprudence had probably been equally fatal to judicial oratory; we hear of great lawyers, but not of distinguished advocates. The highest flight of Pagan oratory which remains is in the adulatory panegyrics of the emperors, pronounced by rival candidates for favor. Rhetoric was taught, indeed, and practised as a liberal, but it had sunk into a mere art: it was taught by salaried professors in all the great towns to the higher youth; but they were mere exercises of fluent diction, on trite or obsolete subjects, the characters of the heroes of the Iliad, or some subtle question of morality.¹

It is impossible to conceive a more sudden and total change than from the school of the rhetorician to a crowded Christian church. The orator suddenly emerged from a listless audience of brother scholars, before whom he had discussed some one of those trivial questions according to formal rules, and whose ear could require no more than terseness or elegance of diction, and a just distribution of the argument: emotion was neither expected nor could be excited. He found himself among a breathless and anxious multitude, whose eternal destiny might seem to hang on his lips, catching up and treasuring his words as those of divine inspiration, and interrupting his more eloquent passages by almost involuntary acclamations.²

¹ The declamations of Quintilian are no doubt favorable specimens both of the subjects and the style of these orators.

² These acclamations sometimes rewarded the more eloquent and successful teachers of rhetoric. Themistius speaks of the *ἐκβοήσεις τε καὶ κρότους*, *οἷον θαμὰ ἀπολαύουσι παρ' ὑμῶν οἱ δαίμονιοι σοφισταί.* — *Basanistes*, p. 236

The orator in the best days of Athens, the tribune in the most turbulent periods of Rome, had not such complete hold upon the minds of his hearers; and — but that the sublime nature of his subject usually lay above the sphere of immediate action, but that, the purer and loftier its tone, if it found instantaneous sympathy, yet it also met the constant inert resistance of prejudice and ignorance and vice to its authority — the power with which this privilege of oratory would have invested the clergy would have been far greater than that of any of the former political or sacerdotal dominations. Wherever the oratory of the pulpit coincided with human passion, it was irresistible; and sometimes, when it resolutely encountered it, it might extort an unwilling triumph. When it appealed to faction, to ferocity, to sectarian animosity, it swept away its audience like a torrent, to any violence or madness at which it aimed; when to virtue, to piety, to peace, it at times subdued the most refractory, and received the homage of devout obedience.

The bishop in general, at least when the hierarchical power became more dominant, reserved for himself an office so productive of influence and so liable to abuse.¹ But men like Athanasius or Augustine were

edit. Deindorf. Compare the note. Chrysostom's works are full of allusions to these acclamations.

¹ The laity were long permitted to address the people in the absence of the clergy. It was objected to the Bishop Demetrius, that he had permitted an unprecedented innovation in the case of Origen: he had allowed a layman to teach when *the bishop was present*. — Euseb., E. H. vi. 19. 'Ο διδάσκων, εἰ καὶ λαϊκὸς ᾗ, ἐμπειροῦς δὲ τοῦ λόγου, καὶ τὸν τρόπον σεμνὸς, διδάσκειτω. — Constit. Apost. viii. 32, 23. "Laicus, præsentibus clericis, nisi illis jubentibus, docere non audeat." — Conc. Carth. can. 98. Jerome might be supposed, in his indignant remonstrance against the right which almost all assumed of interpreting the Scriptures, to be writing of later days. "Quod medicorum est, promittunt medici, tractant fabrilia fabri. Sola Scripturarum

not compelled to wait for that qualification of rank. They received the ready permission of the bishop to exercise at once this important function. In general, a promising orator would rarely want opportunity of distinction; and he who had obtained celebrity would frequently be raised by general acclamation, or by a just appreciation of his usefulness by the higher clergy, to an episcopal throne.¹

But it is difficult to conceive the general effect produced by this devotion of oratory to its new office. From this time, instead of seizing casual opportunities of working on the mind and heart of man, it was constantly, regularly, in every part of the empire, with more or less energy, with greater or less commanding authority, urging the doctrines of Christianity on awe-struck and submissive hearers. It had, of course, as it always has had, its periods of more than usual excitement, its sudden paroxysms of power, by which it convulsed some part of society. The constancy and regularity with which, in the ordinary course of things, it discharged its function, may in some degree have deadened its influence; and, in the period of ignorance and barbarism, the instruction was chiefly through the ceremonial, the symbolic worship, the painting, and even the dramatic representation.

Still, this new moral power, though intermitted at times, and even suspended, was almost continually operating, in its great and sustained energy, through-

ars est, quam sibi omnes passim vindicant. Scribimus, indocti doctique poemata passim. *Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc sophista verbosus, hanc universi præsument, lacerant, docent antequam discant.* Alii addicto supercilio, grandia verba trutinantes, inter mulierculas de sacris literis philosophantur. Alii discunt, proh pudor! à feminis, quod viros doceant: et ne parum hoc sit quadam facilitate verborum, imò audaciâ, edisserunt aliis quod ipsi non intelligunt." — Epist. l. ad Paulinum, vol. iv. p. 571.

¹ But compare Latin Christianity. Pope Lec I., vol. i. p. 168.

out the Christian world; though of course strongly tempered with the dominant spirit of Christianity; and, excepting in those periods either ripe for or preparing some great change in religious sentiment or opinion, the living and general expression of the prevalent Christianity, it was always in greater or less activity, instilling the broader principles of Christian faith and morals: if superstitious, rarely altogether silent; if appealing to passions which ought to have been rebuked before its voice, and exciting those feelings of hostility between conflicting sects which it should have allayed,—yet even then in some hearts its gentler and more Christian tones made a profound and salutary impression, while its more violent language fell off without mingling with the uncongenial feelings. The great principles of the religion—the providence of God, the redemption by Christ, the immortality of the soul, future retribution—gleamed through all the fantastic and legendary lore with which the faith was encumbered and obscured in the darker ages. Christianity first imposed it as a duty on one class of men to be constantly enforcing moral and religious truths on all mankind. Though that duty, of course, was discharged with very different energy, judgment, and success, at different periods, it was always a strong counteracting power, an authorized, and in general respected, remonstrance against the vices and misery of mankind. Man was perpetually reminded, that he was an immortal being under the protection of a wise and all-ruling providence, and destined for a higher state of existence.

Nor was this influence only immediate and temporary: Christian oratory did not cease to speak when its echoes had died away upon the ear, and its ex-

pressions faded from the hearts of those to whom it was addressed. The orations of the Basils and Chrysostoms, the Ambroses and Augustines, became one of the most important parts of Christian literature. That eloquence which, in Rome and Greece, had been confined to civil and judicial affairs, was now inseparably connected with religion. The oratory of the pulpit took its place with that of the bar, the comitia, or the senate, as the historical record of that which once had powerfully moved the minds of multitudes. No part of Christian literature so vividly reflects the times, the tone of religious doctrine or sentiment, in many cases the manners, habits, and character of the period, as the sermons of the leading teachers.

CHAPTER IV.

Christianity and the Fine Arts.

As in literature, so in the fine arts, Christianity had to
Fine arts. await that period in which it should become completely interwoven with the feelings and moral being of mankind, before it could put forth all its creative energies, and kindle into active productiveness those new principles of the noble and the beautiful which it infused into the human imagination. The dawn of a new civilization must be the first epoch for the full development of Christian art. The total disorganization of society, which was about to take place, implied the total suspension of the arts which embellish social life. The objects of admiration were swept away by the destructive ravages of Barbarian warfare; or, where they were left in contemptuous indifference, the mind had neither leisure to indulge, nor refinement enough to feel, that admiration which belongs to a more secure state of society, and of repose from the more pressing toils and anxieties of life.

This suspended animation of the fine arts was of course different in degree in the various parts of Europe, in proportion as they were exposed to the ravages of war, the comparative barbarism of the tribes by which they were overrun, the station held by the clergy, the security which they could command by the sanctity of their character, and their disposable wealth. At every period, from Theodoric, who dwelt

with vain fondness on the last struggles of decaying art, to Charlemagne, who seemed to hail, with prophetic taste, the hope of its revival, there is no period in which the tradition of art was not preserved in some part of Europe, though obscured by ignorance, barbarism, and that still worse enemy, if possible, false and meretricious taste. Christianity, in every branch of the arts, preserved something from the general wreck, and brooded in silence over the imperfect rudiments of each, of which it was the sole conservator. The mere mechanical skill of working stone, of delineating the human face, and of laying on colors so as to produce something like illusion, was constantly exercised in the works which religion required to awaken the torpid emotions of an ignorant and superstitious people.¹

In all the arts, Christianity was at first, of course, purely imitative, and imitative of the prevalent degenerate style. It had not yet felt its strength, and dared not develop, or dreamed not of those latent principles which lay beneath its religion, and which hereafter were to produce works, in its own style, and its own department, rivalling all the wonders of antiquity; when the extraordinary creations of its proper architecture were to arise, far surpassing in the skill of their construction, in their magnitude more than equalling those wonders, and in their opposite indeed, but not less majestic, style, vindicating the genius of Christianity; when Italy was to transcend ancient Greece in painting as much as the whole modern world is inferior to Greece in the rival art of sculpture.

I. Architecture was the first of these arts which was

¹ The Iconoclasts had probably more influence in barbarizing the East than the Barbarians themselves in the West.

summoned to the service of Christianity. The devotion of the earlier ages did not need, and could not command, this subsidiary to pious emotion, — it imparted sanctity to the meanest building; now it would not be content without enshrining its triumphant worship in a loftier edifice. Religion at once offered this proof of its sincerity by the sacrifice of wealth to this hallowed purpose: and the increasing splendor of the religious edifices re-acted upon the general devotion, by the feelings of awe and veneration which they inspired. Splendor, however, did not disdain to be subservient to use; and the arrangements of the new buildings, which arose in all quarters, or were diverted to this new object, accommodated themselves to the Christian ceremonial. In the East, I have already shown, in the church of Tyre, described by Eusebius, the ancient temple lending its model to the Christian church; and the basilica, in the West, adapted with still greater ease and propriety for Christian worship.¹ There were many distinctive points which materially affected the style of Christian architecture. The simplicity of the Grecian temple, as it has been shown,² harmonized perfectly only with its own form of worship: it was more of a public place, sometimes, indeed, hypæthral, or open to the air. The Christian worship demanded more complete enclosure; the church was more of a chamber, in which the voice of an individual could be distinctly heard; and the whole assembly of worshippers, sheltered from the change or inclemency of the weather, or the intrusion of unauthorized persons, might listen in undisturbed devotion to the prayer, the reading of the Scripture, or the preacher.

¹ Vol. ii. pp. 242-244.

² Vol. ii. pp. 344, 345

One consequence of this was the necessity of regular apertures for the admission of light;¹ and these imperatively demanded a departure from the plan of temple architecture.

Windows.

Windows had been equally necessary in the basilicæ for the public legal proceedings; the reading legal documents required a bright and full light; and in the basilicæ the windows were numerous and large. The nave, probably from the earliest period, was lighted by clerestory windows, which were above the roof of the lower aisles.²

Throughout the West, the practice of converting the basilica into the church continued to a late period. The very name seemed appropriate: the royal hall was changed into a dwelling for the GREAT KING.³

¹ In the fanciful comparison (in H. E. x. 4) which Eusebius draws between the different parts of the church and the different gradations of catechumens, he speaks of the most perfect as "shone on by the light through the windows," — τοὺς δὲ πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἀνοίγμασι κατανύζει. He seems to describe the temple as full of light, emblematical of the heavenly light diffused by Christ, — λαμπρὸν καὶ φωτὸς ἔμπλεον τὰ τε ἐνδοθεν καὶ τὰ ἐκτὸς; but it is not easy to discover where his metaphor ends and his fact begins. See Ciampini, vol. i. p. 74.

² The size of the windows has been disputed by Christian antiquaries: some asserted that the early Christians, accustomed to the obscurity of their crypts and catacombs, preferred narrow apertures for light; others, that the services, especially reading the Scriptures, required it to be both bright and equally diffused. Ciampini, as an Italian, prefers the latter, and sarcastically alludes to the narrow windows of Gothic architecture, introduced by the "Vandals," whose first object being to exclude the cold of their northern climate, they contracted the windows to the narrowest dimensions possible. In the monastic churches, the light was excluded, "quia monachis meditantibus fortasse officiebat, quominus possent intento animo soli Deo vacare." — Ciampini, *Vetera Monumenta*. This author considers that the parochial or cathedral churches may, in general, be distinguished from the monastic by this test.

³ "Basilicæ prius vocabantur regum habitacula, nunc autem ideo basilicæ divina templa nominantur, quia ibi Regi omnium Deo cultus et sacrificia offeruntur." — Isidor. Orig. lib. v. "Basilicæ olim negotiis pæne, nunc votis pro tuâ salute susceptis." — Auson. Grat. Act. pro Consul.

The more minute subdivision of the internal arrangement contributed to form the peculiar character of Christian architecture. The different orders of Christians were distributed according to their respective degrees of proficiency. But, besides this, the church had inherited from the synagogue, and from the general feeling of the East, the principle of secluding the female part of the worshippers. Enclosed galleries, on a higher level, were probably common in the synagogues; and this arrangement appears to have been generally adopted in the earlier Christian churches.¹

This great internal complexity necessarily led to still farther departure from the simplicity of design in the exterior plan and elevation. The single or the double row of columns, reaching from the top to the bottom of the building, with the long and unbroken horizontal line of the roof reposing upon it, would give place to rows of unequal heights, or to the division into separate stories.

The same process had probably taken place in the palatial architecture of Rome. Instead of one order of columns, which reached from the top to the bottom of the buildings, rows of columns, one above the other, marked the different stories into which the building was divided.

Christianity thus, from the first, either at once assumed, or betrayed its tendency to, its peculiar character. Its harmony was not that of the Greek, arising from the breadth and simplicity of one design, which, if at times too vast for the eye to contemplate at a single glance, was comprehended and felt at once by

¹ "Populi confluent ad ecclesias castâ celebritate, honestâ utriusque cœtûs discretione." — Augustin. de Civ. Dei, ii. 28. Compare Bingham, viii. 5, 5

the mind ; of which the lines were all horizontal and regular, and the general impression a majestic or graceful uniformity, either awful from its massiveness or solidity, or pleasing from its lightness and delicate proportion.

The harmony of the Christian building (if in fact it attained, before its perfection in the mediæval Gothic, to that first principle of architecture) consisted in the combination of many separate parts, duly balanced into one whole ; the subordination of the accessories to the principal object ; the multiplication of distinct objects coalescing into one rich and effective mass, and pervaded and reduced to a kind of symmetry by one general character in the various lines and in the style of ornament.

This predominance of complexity over simplicity, of variety over symmetry, was no doubt greatly increased by the buildings which, from an early period, arose around the central church, especially in all the monastic institutions. The baptistery was often a separate building ; and frequently, in the ordinary structures for worship, dwellings for the officiating priesthood were attached to, or adjacent to, the church. The Grecian temple appears often to have stood alone, on the brow of a hill, in a grove, or in some other commanding or secluded situation. In Rome, many of the pontifical offices were held by patricians, who occupied their own palaces ; but the Eastern temples were in general surrounded by spacious courts, and with buildings for the residence of the sacerdotal colleges. If these were not the models of the Christian establishments, the same ecclesiastical arrangements, the institution of a numerous and wealthy priestly order attached to the churches, demanded the same

accommodation. Thus a multitude of subordinate buildings would crowd around the central or more eminent house of God. At first, where mere convenience was considered, and where the mind had not awakened to the solemn impressions excited by vast and various architectural works, combined by a congenial style of building, and harmonized by skilful arrangement and subordination, they would be piled together irregularly and capriciously, obscuring that which was really grand, and displaying irreverent confusion rather than stately order. Gradually, as the sense of grandeur and solemnity dawned upon the mind, there would arise the desire of producing one general effect and impression ; but this, no doubt, was the later development of a principle which, if at first dimly perceived, was by no means rigidly or consistently followed out. We must wait many centuries before we reach the culminating period of genuine Christian architecture.

II. Sculpture alone, of the fine arts, has been faithful to its parent Paganism. It has never cordially imbibed the spirit of Christianity. The second creative epoch (how poor comparatively, in fertility and originality !) was contemporary and closely connected with the revival of classical literature in Europe. It has lent itself to Christian sentiment chiefly in two forms ; as necessary and subordinate to architecture, and as monumental sculpture.

Christianity was by no means so intolerant, at least after its first period, of the remains of ancient sculpture, or so perseveringly hostile to the art, as might have been expected from its severe aversion to idolatry. The earlier fathers, indeed, condemn the arts of sculpture and of painting as inseparably connected with Paganism. Every art which frames an image is irre-

claimably idolatrous;¹ and the stern Tertullian reproaches Hermogenes with the two deadly sins of painting and marrying.² The Council of Elvira proscribed paintings on the walls of churches,³ which nevertheless became a common usage during the two next centuries.

In all respects, this severer sentiment was mitigated by time. The civil uses of sculpture were generally recognized. The Christian emperors erected, or permitted the adulation of their subjects to erect, their statues in the different cities. That of Constantine on the great porphyry column, with its singular and unchristian confusion of attributes, has been already noticed. Philostorgius, indeed, asserts that this statue became an object of worship even to the Christians; that lights and frankincense were offered before it, and that the image was worshipped as that of a tutelary god.⁴ The sedition in Antioch arose out of insults to the statues of the emperors;⁵ and the erection of the statue of the empress before the great church in Constantinople gave rise to the last disturbance, which ended in the exile of Chrysostom.⁶ The statue of the emperor was long the representative of the imperial presence; it was revered in the capital and in the

¹ "Ubi artifices statuarum et imaginum et omnis generis simulachrorum diabolus sæculo intulit — caput facta est idololatriæ ars omnis quæ idolum quoque modo edit." — Tertull. de Idol. c. iii. He has no language to express his horror, that makers of images should be admitted into the clerical order.

² "Pingit illicitè, nubit assiduè, legem Dei in libidinem defendit, in artem contemnit; bis falsarius et cauterio et stylo." — In Hermog. cap. i. "Cauterio" refers to encaustic painting. The Apostolic Constitutions reckon a maker of idols with persons of infamous character and profession. — viii. 32.

³ "Placuit picturas in ecclesiâ esse non debere, ne quod colitur et adoratur, in parietibus depingatur." — Can. xxxvi.

⁴ Vol. ii. p. 341. Philostorg. ii. 17.

⁵ Vol. iii. p. 127. ⁶ Vol. iii. 148.

provincial cities with honors approaching to adoration.¹ The modest law of Theodosius, by which he attempted to regulate these ceremonies, of which the adulation bordered at times on impiety, expressly reserved the excessive honors sometimes lavished on these statues at the public games, for the supreme Deity.²

The statues even of the gods were condemned with some reluctance and remorse. No doubt iconoclasm, under the first edicts of the emperors, raged in the provinces with relentless violence. Yet Constantine, we have seen, did not scruple to adorn his capital with images both of gods and men, plundered indiscriminately from the temples of Greece. The Christians, indeed, asserted that they were set up for scorn and contempt.

Even Theodosius exempts such statues as were admirable as works of art from the common sentence of destruction.³ This doubtful toleration of profane art gradually gave place to the admission of Art into the service of Christianity.

Sculpture, and, still more, Painting, were after no long time received as the ministers of Christian piety, and allowed to lay their offerings at the feet of the new religion.

¹ Εἰ γὰρ βασιλέως ἀπόντος εἰκὼν ἀναπληροῖ χώραν βασιλέως, καὶ προσκυνοῦσιν ἄρχοντες καὶ ἱερομηνίαι ἐπιτελοῦνται, καὶ ἄρχοντες ὑπαντῶσι, καὶ ὄμηροι προσκυνοῦσιν οὐ πρὸς τὴν σάνδα βλέποντες ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν χαρατῆρα τοῦ βασιλέως, οὐκ ἐν τῇ φύσει θεωρουμένον ἀλλ' ἐν γραφῇ παραδεικνυμένον. — Joann. Damascen. de Imagin. orat. 9. Jerome, however (on Daniel), compared it to the worship demanded by Nebuchadnezzar: "Ergo judices et principes sæculi, qui imperatorum statuas adorant et imagines, hoc se facere intelligent quod tres pueri facere nolentes placuere Deo."

² They were to prove their loyalty by the respect which they felt for the statue in their secret hearts: "excedens cultura hominum dignitatum super-numini reservetur." — Cod. Theod. xv. 4, 1.

³ A particular temple was to remain open, "in quâ simulachra feruntur posita, artis pretio quam divinitate metienda." — Cod. Theod. xvi. 10, 8.

But the commencement of Christian art was slow, timid, and rude. It long preferred allegory to representation, the true and legitimate object of art.¹ It expanded but tardily during the first centuries, from the significant symbol to the human form in color or in marble.

The Cross was long the primal, and even the sole, symbol of Christianity, — the Cross in its rudest and its most artless form ; for many centuries elapsed before the image of the Saviour was wrought upon it. It was the copy of the common instrument of ignominious execution in all its nakedness ; and nothing, indeed, so powerfully attests the triumph of Christianity as the elevation of this, which to the Jew and the Heathen was the basest, the most degrading, punishment of the lowest criminal,² the proverbial terror of the wretched

¹ Rumohr, *Italianische Forschungen*, i. p. 158. We want the German words *Andeutung* (allusion or suggestion, but neither conveys the same forcible sense), and *Darstellung*, actual representation or placing before the sight. The artists who employ the first can only address minds already furnished with the key to the symbolic or allegoric form. Imitation (the genuine object of art) speaks to all mankind.

² The author has expressed in a former work his impression on this most remarkable fact in the history of Christianity.

“In one respect, it is impossible now to conceive the extent to which the apostles of the crucified Jesus shocked all the feelings of mankind. The public establishment of Christianity, the adoration of ages, the reverence of nations, has thrown around the Cross of Christ an indelible and inalienable sanctity. No effort of the imagination can dissipate the illusion of dignity which has gathered round it: it has been so long dissevered from all its coarse and humiliating associations, that it cannot be cast back and desecrated into its state of opprobrium and contempt. To the most daring unbeliever among ourselves, it is the symbol — the absurd and irrational, he may conceive, but still the ancient and venerable symbol — of a powerful and influential religion. What was it to the Jew and the Heathen? — the basest, the most degrading, punishment of the lowest criminal, the proverbial terror of the wretched slave! It was to them what the most despicable and revolting instrument of public execution is to us. Yet to the Cross of Christ men turned from deities, in which were embodied every attribute of strength power, and dignity,” &c. — Milman’s Bampton Lectures, p. 279.

slave, into an object for the adoration of ages, the reverence of nations. The glowing language of Chrysostom expresses the universal sanctity of the Cross in the fourth century. "Nothing so highly adorns the imperial crown as the Cross, which is more precious than the whole world: its form, at which, of old, men shuddered with horror, is now so eagerly and emulously sought for, that it is found among princes and subjects, men and women, virgins and matrons, slaves and free-men; for all bear it about, perpetually impressed on the most honorable part of the body, or on the forehead as on a pillar. This appears in the sacred temple, in the ordination of priests; it shines again on the body of the Lord, and in the mystic supper. It is to be seen everywhere in honor, in the private house and the public market-place, in the desert, in the highway, on mountains, in forests, on hills, on the sea, in ships, on islands, on our beds, and on our clothes, on our arms, in our chambers, in our banquets, on gold and silver vessels, on gems, in the paintings of our walls, on the bodies of diseased beasts, on human bodies possessed by devils, in war and peace, by day, by night, in the dances of the feasting, and the meetings of the fasting and praying." In the time of Chrysostom, the legend of the Discovery of the True Cross was generally received. "Why do all men vie with each other to approach that true Cross, on which the sacred body was crucified? Why do many, women as well as men, bear fragments of it set in gold as ornaments round their necks, though it was the sign of condemnation? Even emperors have laid aside the diadem to take up the Cross.¹"

¹ Chrysost., Oper. vol. i. p. 57, 569. See in Munter's work (p. 68, *et seq.*)

A more various symbolism gradually grew up, and extended to what approached nearer to works of art. Its rude designs were executed in engravings on seals, or on lamps or glass vessels, and before long in relief on marble, or in paintings on the walls of the cemeteries. The earliest of these were the seal rings, of which many now exist, with Gnostic symbols and inscriptions. These seals were considered indispensable in ancient housekeeping. The Christian was permitted, according to Clement of Alexandria, to bestow on his wife one ring of gold, in order that, being entrusted with the care of his domestic concerns, she might seal up that which might be insecure. But these rings must not have any idolatrous engraving, only such as might suggest Christian or gentle thoughts, the dove, the fish,¹ the ship, the anchor, or the apostolic fishermen fishing for men, which would remind them of children drawn out of the waters of baptism.² Tertullian mentions a communion cup with the image of the Good Shepherd embossed upon it.

the various forms which the Cross assumed, and the fanciful notions concerning it.

"Ipsa species crucis quid est nisi forma quadrata mundi? Oriens de vertice fulgens; Arcton dextra tenet; Auster in lævâ consistit; Occidens sub plantis formatur. Unde Apostolus dicit: ut sciamus, quæ sit altitudo, et latitudo, et longitudo, et profundum. Aves quando volant ad æthera, formam crucis assumunt; homo natans per aquas, vel orans, formâ crucis vehitur. Navis per maria antennâ cruci similitudine sufflatur. Thau litera signum salutis et crucis describitur." — Hieronym. in Marc. xv.

¹ The ΙΧΘΥΣ, according to the rule of the ancient anagram, meant Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτὴρ. It is remarkable, according to the high authority of the Cavalier de Rossi, that, after Constantine, the ΙΧΘΥΣ, as an anagram and as a symbol, almost entirely disappears. It was a secret symbol used for the purpose of what we may venture to call Christian Freemasonry in early and dangerous times. — See the long and very curious letter addressed to Dom Pitra, Editor of the *Spicilegium Solesmense* t. iii.; especially p. 498.

² Clem. Alex. *Pædagog.* iii. 2.

But Christian symbolism soon disdained these narrow limits, extended itself into the whole domain of the Old Testament as well as of the Gospel, and even ventured at times over the unhallowed borders of Paganism. The persons and incidents of the Old Testament had all a typical or allegorical reference to the doctrines of Christianity.¹ Adam asleep, while Eve was taken from his side, represented the death of Christ; Eve, the mother of all who are born to new life; Adam and Eve with the serpent had a latent allusion to the new Adam and the Cross. Cain and Abel, Noah and the ark with the dove and the olive branch, the sacrifice of Isaac, Joseph sold by his brethren as a bond-slave, Moses by the burning bush, breaking the tables of the law, striking water from the rock, with Pharaoh perishing in the Red Sea, the ark of God, Samson bearing the gates of Gaza, Job on the dungheap, David and Goliath, Elijah in the car of fire, Tobias with the fish, Daniel in the lion's den, Jonah issuing from the whale's belly or under the gourd, the three children in the fiery furnace, Ezekiel by the valley of dead bones, were favorite subjects, and had all their mystic significance. They reminded the devout worshipper of the Sacrifice, Resurrection, and Redemption of Christ. The direct illustrations of the New Testament showed the Lord of the Church on a high mountain, with four rivers, the Gospels, flowing from it; the Good Shepherd bearing the lamb,² and sometimes the apostles and saints of a later time appeared in the symbols.

¹ See Mamachi, *Dei Costumi de' primitivi Christiani*, lib. i. c. iv.

² There is a Heathen Prototype (see R. Rochette) even for this good shepherd, and one of the earliest images is encircled with the "Four Seasons" represented by Genii with Pagan attributes. Compare Munter, p. 61. Tombstones, and even inscriptions, were freely borrowed. One Christian tomb has been published by P. Lupi, inscribed "*Diis Manibus*."

Paganism lent some of her spoils to the conqueror.¹ The Saviour was represented under the person and with the lyre of Orpheus, either as the civilizer of men, or in allusion to the Orphic poetry, which had already been interpolated with Christian images. Hence also the lyre was the emblem of truth. Other images, particularly those of animals, were not uncommon.² The

¹ In three very curious dissertations in the last volume of the *Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions on works of art in the catacombs of Rome*, M. Raoul Rochette has shown how much, either through the employment of Heathen artists or their yet imperfectly unheathenized Christianity, the Christians borrowed from the monumental decorations, the symbolic figures, and even the inscriptions, of Heathenism. M. Rochette says, "*La physionomie presque payenne qu'offre la décoration des catacombes de Rome*," p. 96. The Protestant travellers, Burnet and Misson, from the singular mixture of the sacred and the profane in these monuments, inferred that these catacombs were common places of burial for Heathens and Christians. The Roman antiquarians, however, have clearly proved the contrary. M. Raoul Rochette, as well as M. Rostelli (in an essay in the *Roms Beschreibung*), consider this point conclusively made out in favor of the Roman writers. M. R. Rochette has adduced monuments in which the symbolic images and the language of Heathenism and Christianity are strangely mingled together. Munter had observed the Jordan represented as a river god.

² The catacombs at Rome are the chief authorities for this symbolic school of Christian art. They are represented in the works of Bosio, *Roma Sotterranea*, Aringhi, Bottari, and Boldetti. But perhaps the best view of them, being in fact a very judicious and well-arranged selection of the most curious works of early Christian art, may be found in the *Sinnbilder und Kunstvorstellungen der alten Christen*, by Bishop Munter.

The recent discoveries in the catacombs add some curious facts to the history of the symbolism of Christian art. In the catacomb of Callistus discovered and explored by the Cav. de Rossi, which contains, according to his statement, the remains of eleven Roman pontiffs, from Pontianus to Melchisedes, as well as those of St. Cæcilia, appear, in I fear fading colors, symbolic representations of the Rite of Baptism and of the Holy Eucharist. There is a man with a cloak or pallium over a tunic, laying hands on a naked child just emerged from a stream of running water; on the other side is a seated figure, with a pallium, like the dress of a philosopher, apparently in the act of preaching.

The symbolism of the Eucharist is more various, in more than one picture, and therefore more obscure. In one is a table with loaves of bread, and a fish in a platter. On one wall is a man stretching out his naked arm over the bread, as if, according to De Rossi, in the act of consecrating it; on the other is a woman in the act of prayer: it is conjectured that she symbol

Church was represented by a ship, the anchor denoted the pure ground of faith; the stag implied the hart which thirsted after the water-brooks; the horse, the rapidity with which men ought to run and embrace the doctrine of salvation; the hare, the timid Christian hunted by persecutors; the lion prefigured strength, or appeared as the emblem of the tribe of Judah; the fish was an anagram of the Saviour's name; the dove indicated the simplicity, the cock the vigilance, of the Christian; the peacock and the phoenix, the Resurrection.

But these were simple and artless memorials, to which devotion gave all their value and significance; in themselves they neither had, nor aimed at, grandeur or beauty. They touched the soul by the reminiscences which they awakened, or the thoughts which they suggested: they had nothing of that inherent power over the emotions of the soul which belongs to the higher works of art.¹

izes the Church. The fish (the ἰχθύς), according to De Rossi, symbolizes the Saviour; the real presence (or if I understand Cav. de Rossi, more than the real presence); but how a symbol can be more than symbolic, I am at a loss to comprehend. C. de Rossi's connection of the remarkable representation of the scene in John xxi. 9 and 19 with the Eucharist seems to me a very perilous interpretation, especially to a devout Roman Catholic. — Letter to Dom Pitra, quoted above.

¹ All these works, in their different forms, are in general of coarse and inferior execution. The funereal vases found in the Christian cemeteries are of the lowest style of workmanship. The senator Buonarrotti, in his work, "De' Vetri Cemeteriali, thus accounts for this: "Stettero sempre lontane da quelle arti, colle quali avessero potuto correr pericolo di contaminarsi colla idolatria, e da ciò avvenne, che pochi, o niuno di essi si diede alla pittura e alla scultura, le quali aveano per oggetto principale di rappresentare le deità, e le favole de' gentili. Sicche, volendo i fedeli adornar con simboli devoti i loro vasi, erano forzati per lo più a valersi di artefici inesperti, e che professavano altri mestieri." — See Mamachi, vol. i. p. 275. Compare Rumohr, who suggests other reasons for the rudeness of the earliest Christian relief, in my opinion, though by no means irreconcilable with this, neither so simple nor satisfactory. — p. 170.

Art must draw nearer to human nature and to the truth of life, before it can accomplish its object. The elements of this feeling, even the first sense of external grandeur and beauty, had yet to be infused into the Christian mind. The pure and holy and majestic inward thoughts and sentiments had to work into form, and associate themselves with appropriate visible images. This want and this desire were long unfelt.

The person of the Saviour was a subject of grave dispute among the older Fathers. Some took the expressions of the sacred writings in a literal sense, and insisted that his outward form was mean and unseemly. Justin Martyr speaks of his want of form and comeliness.¹ Tertullian, who could not but be in extremes, expresses the same sentiment with his accustomed vehemence. The person of Christ wanted not merely divine majesty, but even human beauty.² Clement of Alexandria maintains the same opinion.³ But the most curious illustration of this notion occurs in the work of Origen against Celsus. In the true spirit of Grecian art and philosophy, Celsus denies that the Deity could dwell in a mean form or low stature. Origen is embarrassed with the argument: he fears to recede from the literal interpretation of Isaiah, but endeavors to soften it off, and denies that it refers to lowliness of stature, or means more than the absence of noble form or pre-eminent beauty. He then triumphantly adduces the verse of the forty-

¹ Τὸν ἀειδὴ καὶ ἄτιμον φάνεοντα. — Dial. cum Tryph. 85 and 88, 100.

² "Quodcumque illud corpusculum sit, quoniam habitum, et quoniam conspectum sit, si inglorius, si ignobilis, si inhonorabilis; meus erit Christus. . . . Sed species ejus inhonorata, deficiens ultra omnes homines." — Contr. Marc. iii. 17. "Ne aspectu quidem honestus." — Adv. Judæos, c. 14. "Etiam despicientium formam ejus hæc erat vox. Adeo nec humanæ honestatis corpus fuit, nedum cœlestis claritatis." — De Carn. Christi, c. 5.

³ Pædagog. iii. 1

fourth Psalm, "Ride on in thy loveliness and in thy beauty."¹

But, as the poetry of Christianity obtained more full possession of the human mind, these debasing and inglorious conceptions were repudiated by the more vivid imagination of the great writers in the fourth century. The great principle of Christian art began to awaken; the outworking, as it were, of the inward purity, beauty, and harmony, upon the symmetry of the external form, and the lovely expression of the countenance. Jerome, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, with one voice, assert the majestic and engaging appearance of the Saviour. The language of Jerome first shows the sublime conception which was brooding, as it were, in the Christian mind, and was at length slowly to develop itself up to the gradual perfection of Christian art. "Assuredly that splendor and majesty of the hidden divinity, which shone even in his human countenance, could not but attract at first sight all beholders."—"Unless he had something celestial in his countenance and in his look, the apostles would not immediately have followed him."²—"The Heavenly Father poured upon him in full streams that corporeal grace which is distilled drop by drop upon mortal man." Such are the glowing expressions of Chrysostom.³ Gregory of Nyssa applies all the

¹ Ἀμνηχανὸν γὰρ ὅτω θεῖον τι πλεον τῶν ἄλλων προσῆν, μηδὲν ἄλλοῦ διαφέρειν τοῦτο δὲ οὐδὲν ἄλλου διέφερεν, ἀλλ' ὡς φασὶ, μικρὸν, καὶ δυσευδὲς, καὶ ἀγενὲς ἦν. — Celsus, apud Origen. vi. 75. Origen quotes the text of the LXX., in which it is the forty-fourth, and thus translated: Τῇ ὡραιότητί σου, καὶ τῷ κάλλει σου καὶ ἐντεινον, καὶ κατευοδοῦ, καὶ βασίλευε.

² "Certe fulgor ipse et majestas divinitatis occultæ, quæ etiam in humanâ facie relucebat, ex primo ad se venientes trahere poterat aspectu." — Hieronym. in Matth. c. ix. 9.

"Nisi enim habuisset et in vultu quiddam et in oculis sidereum, nunquam eum statim secuti fuissent Apostoli." — Epist. ad Princip. Virginem.

³ In Ps. xliv.

vivid imagery of the Song of Solomon to the person as well as to the doctrine of Christ; and Augustine declares that "He was beautiful on his mother's bosom, beautiful in the arms of his parents, beautiful upon the Cross, beautiful in the sepulchre."

There were some, however, who even at this, and to a much later period, chiefly among those addicted to monkish austerity, adhered to the older opinion, as though human beauty were something carnal and material. St. Basil interprets even the forty-fourth Psalm in the more austere sense. Many of the painters among the Greeks, even in the eighth century, who were monks of the rule of St. Basil, are said to have been too faithful to the judgment of their master, or perhaps their rude art was better qualified to represent a mean figure, with harsh outline and stiff attitude and a blackened countenance, rather than majesty of form or beautiful expression. Such are the Byzantine pictures of this school. The harsh Cyril of Alexandria repeats the assertion of the Saviour's mean appearance, even beyond the ordinary race of men, in the strongest language.¹ This controversy proves decisively that there was no traditional type, which was admitted to represent the human form of the Saviour. The distinct assertion of Augustine, that the form and countenance of Christ were entirely unknown, and painted with every possible variety of expression, is conclusive as to the West.²

¹ Ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἄγμον, ἐκλείπον παρὰ πάντας τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. — De Nud. Noe, lib. ii. t. i. p. 43.

² "Qua fuerit ille facie nos penitus ignoramus: nam et ipsius Dominicæ facies carnis innumerabilium cogitationum diversitate variatur et fingitur, quæ tamen una erat, quæcunque erat." — De Trin. lib. vii. c. 4, 5.

The Christian apologists uniformly acknowledge the charge, that they have no altars or images. — Minuc. Fel. Octavius, x. p. 61. Arnob. vi. post init Origen, contra Celsum, viii. p. 389. Compare Jablonski (Dissertatio de Ori

In the East we may dismiss at once as a manifest fable, probably of local superstition, the statue of Christ at Cæsarea Philippi, representing him in the act of healing the woman with the issue of blood.¹ But there can be no doubt that paintings, purporting to be actual resemblances of Jesus, of Peter, and of Paul, were current in the time of Eusebius in the East,² though I am disinclined to receive the authority of a later writer, that Constantine adorned his new city with likenesses of Christ and his apostles.

The earliest images emanated, no doubt, from the
 Earliest
 images
 Gnostic. Gnostic sects, who not merely blended the Christian and Pagan or Oriental notions on their gems and seals, engraved with the mysterious Abraxas; but likewise, according to their eclectic system, consecrated small golden or silver images of all those ancient sages whose doctrines they had adopted, or had fused together in their wild and various theories. The image of Christ appeared with those of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and probably some of the Eastern philosophers.³ The Carpocratians

gine *Imaginum Christi*, Opusc. vol. iii. p. 377), who well argues, that, consistently with Jewish manners, there could not have been any likeness of the Lord. Compare Pearson on the Creed, vol. ii. p. 101.

¹ Euseb., H. E. vii. 18, with the *Excursus* of Heinichen. These were, probably, two bronze figures, one of a kneeling woman in the act of supplication; the other, the upright figure of a man, probably of a Cæsar, which the Christian inhabitants of Cæsarea Philippi transformed into the Saviour and the woman in the Gospels: *Τούτον δὲ τὸν ἀνδριάντα εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φέρειν ἔλεγον*. Eusebius seems desirous of believing the story. Compare Munter.

² Ὅτε καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων τῶν αὐτοῦ τὰς εἰκόνας Παύλον καὶ Πέτρον καὶ αὐτοῦ δὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διὰ χρωμάτων ἐν γραφαῖς σωζομένας ἱστορήσαμεν.—*Ibid.* loc. cit.

³ Irenæus de Hær. i. c. 84 (edit. Grabe). Epiphan. Hæres. xxvii. 6. Augustin. de Hæresib. c. vii. These images of Christ were said to have been derived from the collection of Pontius Pilate. Compare Jablonski's *Dissertation*.

had painted portraits of Christ; and Marcellina,¹ a celebrated female heresiarch, exposed to the view of the Gnostic church in Rome the portraits of Jesus and St. Paul, of Homer and of Pythagoras. Of this nature, no doubt, were the images of Abraham, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Apollonius, and Christ, set up in his private chapel by the emperor Alexander Severus. These small images,² which varied very much, it should seem, in form and feature, could contribute but little, if in the least, to form that type of superhuman beauty, which might mingle the sentiment of human sympathy with reverence for the divinity of Christ. Christian art long brooded over such feelings as those expressed by Jerome and Augustine, before it could even attempt to embody them in marble or color.³

¹ Marcellina lived about the middle of the second century, or a little later.

² Of these Gnostic images of Christ there are only two extant which seem to have some claim to authenticity and antiquity. Those from the collection of Chifflet are now considered to represent Serapis. One is mentioned by M. Raoul Rochette (*Types Imitatifs de l'Art du Christianisme*, p. 21): it is a stone, a kind of tessera with a head of Christ, young and beardless, in profile, with the word ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ in Greek characters, with the symbolic fish below. This is in the collection of M. Fortia d'Urban, and is engraved as a vignette to M. R. Rochette's essay. The other is adduced in an "Essay on Ancient Coins, Medals, and Gems, as illustrating the Progress of Christianity in the Early Ages, by the Rev. R. Walsh." This is a kind of medal or tessera of metal, representing Christ as he is described in the apocryphal letter of Lentulus to the Roman senate. (*Fabric. Cod. Apoc. Nov. Test.* p. 301, 302.) It has a head of Christ, the hair parted over the forehead, covering the ears, and falling over the shoulders; the shape is long, the beard short and thin. It has the name of Jesus in Hebrew, and has not the *nimbus*, or glory. On the reverse is an inscription, in a kind of cabalistic character, of which the sense seems to be, "The Messiah reigns in peace; God is made man." This may possibly be a tessera of the Jewish Christians, or modelled after a Gnostic type of the first age of Christianity. See *Discours sur les Types Imitatifs de l'Art du Christianisme*, par M. Raoul Rochette.

³ I must not omit the description of the person of our Saviour in the spurious Epistle of Lentulus to the Roman Senate (see *Fabric. Cod. Apoc. N. T.* i. p. 301), since it is referred to constantly by writers on early Christian art

The earliest pictures of the Saviour seem formed on one type or model. They all represent the oval countenance, slightly lengthened; the grave, soft, and melancholy expression; the short, thin beard; the hair parted on the forehead into two long masses, which fall upon the shoulders.¹ Such are the features which characterize the earliest extant painting, — that on the vault of the cemetery of St. Callistus, — in which the Saviour is represented as far as his bust, like the images on bucklers in use among the Romans.² A later painting, in the chapel of the cemetery of St. Pontianus, resembles this;³ and a third was discovered in the catacomb then called that of St. Callistus by Boldetti, but unfortunately perished while he was looking at it, in the attempt to remove it from the wall. The same countenance appears on some, but not the earliest, reliefs on the sarcophagi; five of which may be referred, according to M. Rochette, to the time of Julian.

But what proof is there of the existence of this Epistle previous to the great era of Christian painting? "He was a man of tall and well-proportioned form; the countenance severe and impressive, so as to move the beholders at once to love and awe. His hair was of the color of wine (*vinei coloris*), reaching to his ears, with no radiation (*sine radiatione*, without the nimbus) and standing up, from his ears, clustering and bright, and flowing down over his shoulders, parted on the top according to the fashion of the Nazarenes. The brow high and open; the complexion clear, with a delicate tinge of red; the aspect frank and pleasing; the nose and mouth finely formed; the beard thick, parted, and the color of the hair; the eyes blue, and exceedingly bright. . . . His countenance was of wonderful sweetness and gravity; no one ever saw him laugh, though he was seen to weep; his stature was tall; the hands and arms finely formed. . . . He was the most beautiful of the sons of men." Compare Latin Christianity. The unanswerable proof that this description is of late date is that it was not produced at the second Council of Nicæa, at which time Christendom was ransacked to find proofs, good or bad, of early image-worship.

¹ Raoul Rochette, p. 26.

² Bottari, *Pittura e Sculture Sacre*, vol. ii. tav. lxx. p. 42.

³ This, however was probably repainted in the time of Hadrian I

Of one, that of Olybrius, the date appears certain, — the close of the fourth century. These, the paintings at least, are no doubt the work of Greek artists; and this head may be considered the archetype, the Hieratic model, of the Christian conception of the Saviour, imagined in the East, and generally adopted in the West.¹

Reverential awe, diffidence in their own skill, the still dominant sense of the purely spiritual nature of the Parental Deity,² or perhaps the exclusive habit of dwelling upon the Son as the direct object of religious worship, restrained early Christian art from those attempts to which we are scarcely reconciled by the sublimity and originality of Michael Angelo and Raffaele. Even the symbolic representation of the Father was rare. Where it does appear, it is under the symbol of an immense hand issuing from a cloud, or a ray of light streaming from heaven, to imply, it may be presumed, the creative and all-enlightening power of the Universal Father.³

¹ Rumohr considers a statue of the Good Shepherd in the Vatican collection, from its style, to be a very early work; the oldest monument of Christian sculpture, prior to the urn of Junius Bassus, which is of the middle of the fourth century. — *Italienische Forschungen*, vol. i. p. 168. In that usually thought the earliest, that of Junius Bassus, Jesus Christ is represented between the apostles, beardless, seated in a curule chair, with a roll half unfolded in his hand, and under his feet a singular representation of the upper part of a man holding an inflated veil with his two hands, a common symbol or personification of heaven. See R. Rochette, p. 43, who considers these sarcophagi anterior to the formation of the ordinary type.

² Compare Munter, ii. p. 49: "*Nefas habent docti ejus (ecclesiæ Catholicæ) credere Deum figurâ humani corporis terminatum.*" — August. Conf vi. 11.

³ M. Emeric David (in his *Discours sur les Anciens Monumens*, to which I am indebted for much information) says that the French artists had first the *heureuse hardiesse* of representing the Eternal Father under the human form. The instance to which he alludes is contained in a Latin Bible (in the *Cabinet Impérial*) cited by Montfaucon, but not fully described. It was presented to Charles the Bald by the canons of the church of Tours, in the year

The Virgin Mother could not but offer herself to the imagination, and be accepted at once as the subject of Christian art. As respect for the mother of Christ deepened into reverence, reverence bowed down to adoration; as she became the mother of God, and herself a deity in popular worship, this worship was the parent, and, in some sense, the offspring of art. Augustine, indeed, admits that the real features of the Virgin, as of the Saviour, were unknown.¹ But the fervent language of Jerome shows that art had already attempted to shadow out the conception of mingling virgin purity and maternal tenderness, which as yet probably was content to dwell within the verge of human nature, and aspired not to mingle a divine idealism with these more mortal feelings. The outward form and countenance could not but be the image of the purity and gentleness of the soul within; and this primary object of Christian art could not but give rise to one of its characteristic distinctions from that of the ancients,—the substitution of mental expression for purely corporeal beauty. As reverential modesty precluded all exposure of the form, the countenance was the whole picture. This reverence, indeed, in the very earliest specimens of the art, goes still further, and confines itself to the expression of composed and dignified attitude. The artists did not even venture to expose the face. With one exception, the Virgin appears veiled on the reliefs on the sarcophagi, and in the earliest paintings. The oldest known picture of the Virgin is in the catacomb,

350. This period is far beyond the bounds of our present history. See therefore E. David, pp 43, 46.

¹ "Neque enim novimus faciem Virginis Mariæ." — Augustin. de Trin. c. viii. "Ut ipsa corporis facies simulacrum fuerit mentis, figura probitatis." — Ambros. de Virgin. lib. ii. c. 2.

once so called, of St. Callistus, in which she appears seated in the calm majesty, and in the dress, of a Roman matron. It is the transition, as it were, from ancient to modern art, which still timidly adheres to its conventional type of dignity.¹ But, in the sarcophagi, art has already more nearly approximated to its most exquisite subject: the Virgin Mother is seated, with the divine child in her lap, receiving the homage of the Wise Men. She is still veiled,² but with the rounded form and grace of youth, and a kind of sedate chastity of expression in her form, which seems designed to convey the feeling of gentleness and holiness. Two of these sarcophagi—one in the Vatican collection, and one at Milan—appear to disprove the common notion, that the representation of the Virgin was unknown before the Council of Ephesus.³ That council, in its zeal against the doctrines of Nestorius, established, as it has been called, a Hieratic type of the Virgin, which is traced throughout Byzantine art, and on the coins of the Eastern empire. This type, however, gradually degenerates with the darkness of the age, and the decline of art. The countenance, sweetly smiling on the child, becomes sad and severe. The head is bowed with a gloomy and almost sinister expression; and the countenance gradually darkens, till it assumes a black color, and seems to adapt itself in this respect to an ancient tradition. At length, even the sentiment of maternal affection is effaced; both the mother and

¹ Bottari, *Pitture e Sculture Sacre*, t. iii. p. 111, tav. 218. See *Mémoire de M. Raoul Rochette*, *Académ. Inscript.*

² In Bottari there is one picture of the Virgin with the head naked (t. ii. tav. cxxvi.),—the only one known to M. Raoul Rochette.

³ A.D. 431. This opinion is maintained by Basnage and most Protestant writers.

child become stiff and lifeless; the child is swathed in tight bands, and has an expression of pain rather than of gentleness or placid infancy.¹

The apostles, particularly St. Peter and St. Paul, were among the earlier objects of Christian art. Though in one place, St. Augustine asserts that the persons of the apostles were equally unknown with that of the Saviour, in another he acknowledges that their pictures were exhibited on the walls of many churches for the edification of the faithful.² In a vision ascribed to Constantine, but of very doubtful authority, the emperor is said to have recognized the apostles by their likeness to their portraits.³ A picture known to St. Ambrose pretended to have come down by regular tradition from their time; and Chrysostom, when he studied the writings, gazed with reverence on what he supposed an authentic likeness of the apostle.⁴ Paul and Peter appear on many of the oldest monuments, on the glass vessels, fragments of which have been discovered, and on which Jerome informs us that they were frequently painted. They are found, as we have seen, on the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, and on many others. In one of these, in which the costume is Roman, St. Paul is represented bald, and with the high nose, as

¹ Compare Raoul Rochette, page 35. M. R. Rochette observes much similarity between the pictures of the Virgin ascribed to St. Luke, the tradition of whose painting ascends to the sixth century, and the Egyptian works which represent Isis nursing Horus. I have not thought it necessary to notice further these palpable forgeries, though the object, in so many places, of popular worship.

² St. Augustin in Genesin, cap. xxii. "Quod pluribus locis simul eos (apostolos) cum illo (Christo) pictos viderint . . . in pictis parietibus. — Augustin. de Cons. Evang. i. 16.

³ Hadrian I. Epist. ad Imp. Constantin. et Iren. Concil. Nic. ii. art. 2.

⁴ These two assertions rest on the authority of Joannes Damascenus, de Imagin.

he is described in the *Philopatris*,¹ which, whatever its age, has evidently taken these personal peculiarities of the apostle from the popular Christian representations. St. Peter has usually a single tuft of hair on his bald forehead.² Each has a book, the only symbol of his apostleship. St. Peter has neither the sword nor the keys. In the same relief, St. John and St. James are distinguished from the rest by their youth: already, therefore, this peculiarity was established which prevails throughout Christian art. The majesty of age, and a kind of dignity of precedence, are attributed to Peter and Paul, while all the grace of youth, and the most exquisite gentleness, are centred in John. They seem to have assumed this peculiar character of expression, even before their distinctive symbols.

It may excite surprise, that the acts of martyrdom did not become the subjects of Christian art, Martyrdom not represented. till far down in the dark ages. That of St. Sebastian, a relief in terra-cotta, which formerly existed in the cemetery of St. Priscilla, and that of Peter and Paul in the Basilica Siciniana, assigned by Ciampini to the fifth century, are rare exceptions, and both of doubtful date and authenticity. The martyrdom of St. Felicitas and her seven children, discovered in 1812, in a small oratory within the baths of Titus, cannot be earlier, according to M. R. Rochette, than the seventh century.³

The absence of all gloomy or distressing subjects is the remarkable and characteristic feature in the

¹ Γαλιλαῖος ἡναφαντίας ἐπὶ ῥῆνος. — Philop. c. xii.

² Munter says the arrest of St. Peter (Acts. xii. 1, 3) is the only subject from the Acts of the Apostles among the monuments in the catacombs. — ii. p. 104.

³ Raoul Rochette, in *Mém. de l'Académie*, tom. xiii. p. 165.

catacombs of Rome and in all the earliest Christian art. A modern writer, who has studied the subject with profound attention, has expressed himself in the following language:¹ "The catacombs destined for the sepulture of the primitive Christians, for a long time peopled with martyrs, ornamented during times of persecution, and under the dominion of melancholy thoughts and painful duties, nevertheless everywhere represent in all the historic parts of these paintings only what is noble and exalted,² and in that which constitutes the purely decorative part only pleasing and graceful subjects, — the images of the good shepherd, representations of the vintage, of the agape with pastoral scenes: the symbols are fruits, flowers, palms, crowns, lambs, doves, in a word nothing but what excites emotions of joy, innocence, and charity. Entirely occupied with the celestial recompense which awaited them after the trials of their troubled life, and often of so dreadful a death, the Christians saw in death, and even in execution, only a way by which they arrived at this everlasting happiness; and, far from associating with this image that of the tortures or privations which opened heaven before them, they took pleasure in enlivening it with smiling colors, or presented it under agreeable symbols, adorning it with flowers and vine leaves; for it is thus that the asylum of death appears to us in the Christian catacombs, There is no sign of mourning, no token of resentment, no expression of vengeance: all breathes softness, benevolence, charity."³

¹ M. D'Agincourt says, "Il n'a rencontré lui-même dans ces souterrains aucune trace de nul autre tableau (one of barbarian and late design had before been noticed) représentant une martyre." — *Hist. de l'Art.*

² "Des traits héroïques."

³ Gregory of Nyssa, however, describes the heroic acts of St. Theodorus

It may seem even more singular, that the passion of our Lord himself remained a subject interdited, as it were by awful reverence. The crucifix.

The cross, it has been said, was the symbol of Christianity many centuries before the crucifix.¹ It was rather a cheerful and consolatory than a depressing and melancholy sign; it was adorned with flowers, with crowns and precious stones, a pledge of the resurrection, rather than a memorial of the passion. The catacombs of Rome, faithful to their general character, offer no instance of a crucifixion, nor does any allusion to such a subject of art occur in any early writer.² Cardinal Bona gives the following as the progress of the gradual change: I. The simple cross.³ II. The cross with the lamb at the foot of it.⁴ III. Christ clothed, on the cross, with hands uplifted in prayer, but not nailed to it. IV. Christ fastened to the cross with four nails, still living, and with open eyes. He was

as painted on the walls of a church dedicated to that saint. "The painter had represented his sufferings, the forms of the tyrants like wild beasts. The fiery furnace, the death of the athlete of Christ,—all this had the painter expressed by colors, as in a book, and adorned the temple like a pleasant and blooming meadow. The dumb walls speak and edify."

¹ See, among other authorities, Munter, p. 77. "Es ist unmöglich das alter der Crucifixe genau zu bestimmen. Von dem Ende des siebenten Jahrhunderts kannte die Kirche sie nicht."

² The decree of the Quinisextan Council, in 695, is the clearest proof that up to that period the Passion had been usually represented under a symbolic or allegoric form.

³ There is an interesting description by the Cav. de Rossi in the *Spicilegium Solennense*, iv. p. 505, *et seqq.*, on the form of the cross, as usually found in the catacombs. Before the beginning of the fourth century, the simple cross + occurs rarely, if at all. It is "dissembled," according to de Rossi's phrase, in various ways, as X, so as to be confounded with the initial letter of Christ, and takes other monogrammatic forms. Under Constantine and after Constantine, it is generally the monogram with the Labarum. See pp. 329, 331 at the bottom, and 322.

⁴ Sub cruce sanguineâ niveo stat Christus in agno,
Agnus ut innocuâ injusto datur hostia letho.

Pauli. Nolan, Epist. 32

not represented as dead till the tenth or eleventh century.¹ There is some reason to believe that the bust of the Saviour first appeared on the cross, and afterwards the whole person; the head was at first erect, with some expression of divinity; by degrees it drooped with the agony of pain, the face was wan and furrowed, and death with all its anguish, was imitated by the utmost power of coarse art,—mere corporeal suffering without sublimity, all that was painful in truth, with nothing that was tender and affecting. This change took place among the monkish artists of the Lower Empire. Those of the order of St. Basil introduced it into the West; and, from that time, these painful images, with those of martyrdom, and every scene of suffering which could be imagined by the gloomy fancy of anchorites, who could not be moved by less violent excitement, spread throughout Christendom. It required all the wonderful magic of Italian art to elevate them into sublimity.

But early Christian art, at least that of painting, was not content with these simpler subjects: it endeavored to represent designs of far bolder and more intricate character. Among the earliest descriptions of Christian painting is that in the Church of St. Felix, by Paulinus of Nola.² In the

Paintings
at Nola.

¹ De cruce Vaticanâ.

² The lines are not without merit:—

Quo duce Jordanes suspenso gurgite fixis
Fluctibus, a facie divinæ restitit arcæ.
Vis nova divisit flumen; pars amne recluso
Constitit, et fluvii pars in mare lapsa cucurrit,
Destituitque vadum: et validus qui forte ruebat
Impetus, adstrictas altè cumulaverat undas.
Et tremulâ compage minax pendebat aquæ mons
Despectans transire pedes arente profundo;
Et medio pedibus siccis in flumine ferri
Pulverulenta hominum duro vestigia limo.

If this description is drawn from the picture, not from the book, the painter

colonnades of that church were painted scenes from the Old Testament: among them were the Passage of the Red Sea; Joshua and the Ark of God; Ruth and her Sister-in-law, one deserting, the other following her parent in fond fidelity,¹—an emblem, the poet suggests, of mankind, part deserting, part adhering to the true faith. The object of this embellishment of the churches was to beguile the rude minds of the illiterate peasants who thronged with no very exalted motives to the altar of St. Felix,—to pre-occupy their minds with sacred subjects, so that they might be less eager for the festival banquets, held, with such munificence and with such a concourse of strangers, at the tomb of the martyr.² These gross and irreligious must have possessed some talent for composition and for landscape, as well as for the drawing of figures.

¹ Quam geminæ scindunt sese in diversa sorores:—

Ruth sequitur sanctam, quam deserit Orpa, parentem;

Perfidiam nurus una, fidem nurus altera monstrat.

Præfert una Deum patriæ patriam altera vitæ.

² Forte requiratur, quam ratione gerendi

Sederit hæc nobis sententia, pingere sanctas

Raro more domos animantibus adsimulatis.

. . . turba frequentior hic est

Rusticitas non casta fide, neque docta legendi.

Hæc adsueta diâ sacris servire profanis,

Ventre Deo, tandem convertitur advena Christo,

Dum sanctorum opera in Christo miratur aperta

Propterea visum nobis opus utile, totis

Felicitis domibus picturâ illudere sanctâ:

Si forte attonitas hæc per spectacula mentes

Agrestum caperet fucata coloribus umbra,

Quæ super exprimitur literis—ut littera monstret

Quod manus explicuit: dumque omnes picta vicissim

Ostendunt releguntque sibi, vel tardius escæ

Sunt memores, dum grata oculis jejunia pascunt:

Atque ita se melior stupefactis inserat usus,

Dum fallit pictura famem; sanctasque legenti

Historias castorum operum subrepi honestas

Exemplis inducta piis; potatur hianti

Sobrietas, nimis subeunt oblivia vini:

Dumque diem ducunt spatio majore tuentes,

Pocula rarescunt, quia per mirantia tracto

Tempore, jam paucae superant epulantibus horæ.

In Natal. Felic., Poema **xxiv.**

desires led them to the church: yet, gazing on these pictures, they would not merely be awakened by these holy examples to purer thoughts and holier emotions; they would feast their eyes instead of their baser appetites; an involuntary sobriety and forgetfulness of the wine-flagon would steal over their souls; at all events, they would have less time to waste in the indulgence of their looser festivity.

Christianity has been the parent of music, probably as far surpassing in skill and magnificence
 Music. the compositions of earlier times, as the cathedral organ the simpler instruments of the Jewish or Pagan religious worship. But this perfection of the art belongs to a much later period in Christian history. Like the rest of its service, the music of the Church no doubt grew up from a rude and simple, to a more splendid and artificial form. The practice of singing hymns is co-eval with Christianity; the hearers of the apostles sang the praises of God; and the first sound which reached the Pagan ear from the secluded sanctuaries of Christianity was the hymn to Christ as God.¹ The Church succeeded to an inheritance of religious lyrics as unrivalled in the history of poetry as of religion.² The Psalms were introduced early into the public service; but at first, apparently, though some psalms may have been sung on appropriate occasions,—the 73d, called the morning, and the 141st, the evening psalm,—the whole Psalter was introduced only as part of the Old Testament, and read in the course of the service.³ With the poetry

¹ See the famous Epistle of Pliny.

² The Temple Service, in Lightfoot's Works, gives the Psalms which were appropriate to each day. The author has given a slight outline of this hymnology of the Temple in the Quarterly Review, xxxviii. p. 20.

³ Bingham's Antiquities, vol. xiv. 1, 5.

did they borrow the music of the synagogue? Was this music the same which had filled the spacious courts of the Temple, perhaps answered to those sad strains which had been heard beside the waters of the Euphrates, or even descended from still earlier times of glory, when Deborah or when Miriam struck their timbrels to the praise of God? This question it must be impossible to answer; and no tradition, as far as I am aware, indicates the source from which the Church borrowed her primitive harmonies, though the probability is certainly in favor of their Jewish parentage.

The Christian hymns of the primitive churches seem to have been eucharistic, and confined to the glorification of their God and Saviour.¹ Prayer was considered the language of supplication and humiliation; the soul awoke, as it were, in the hymn to more ardent expressions of gratitude and love. Probably, the music was nothing more at first than a very simple accompaniment, or no more than the accordances of the harmonious voices: it was the humble subsidiary of the hymn of praise, not itself the soul-engrossing art.² Nothing could be more simple than the earliest recorded hymns: they were fragments from the Scripture,—the doxology, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!” the angelic hymn, “Glory be to God on high!” the cherubic hymn from Rev. iv. 12, ‘Holy, holy, holy!’ the hymn of victory, Rev. xv. 3, “Great and marvellous are thy works.” It was not improbably the cherubic hymn, to which Pliny alludes, as forming part of the Christian worship. The “Magnificat” and the “Nunc

¹ Gregory of Nyssa defines a hymn—*ὕμνος ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπὶ τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν ἡμῖν ἀγαθοῖς ἀνατιθεμένη τῷ Θεῷ εὐφημία*.—See Ps. ii.

² Private individuals wrote hymns to Christ, which were generally sung—Euseb., H. E. v. 28; vii. 24.

dimittis" were likewise sung from the earliest ages; the Halleluia was the constant prelude or burden of the hymn.¹ Of the character of the music few and imperfect traces are found. In Egypt the simplest form long prevailed. In the monastic establishments, one person arose, and repeated the psalm; the others sat around in silence on their lowly seats, and responded, as it were, to the psalm within their hearts.² In Alexandria, by the order of Athanasius, the psalms were repeated with the slightest possible inflection of voice: it could hardly be called singing.³ Yet, though the severe mind of Athanasius might disdain such subsidiaries, the power of music was felt to be a dangerous antagonist in the great religious contest. Already the soft and effeminate singing, begun by Paul of Samosata, had estranged the hearts of many worshippers; and his peculiar doctrines had stolen into the soul, which had been melted by the artificial melodies introduced by him into the service. The Gnostic hymns of Bardesanes and Valentinus,⁴ no doubt, had their musical accompaniment. Arius himself had composed hymns which were sung to popular airs; and the streets of Constantinople, even to the time of Chrysostom, echoed at night to those seductive strains which denied or imperfectly expressed the

¹ Alleluia novis balat ovile choris.

Paulin. Epist. ad Sev. 12.

Curvorum hinc chorus helciariorum,

Responsantibus Alleluia ripis,

Ad Christum levat amnicum celeusma.

Sid. Apoll. lib. ii. ep. 10.

² "Absque eo qui dicturus in medium Psalmos surrexerit, cuncti sedilibus humillimis insidentes, ad vocem psallentis omni cordis intencione dependent." — Cassian. Instit. ii. 1, 2. Compare Euseb., H. E. ii. 17; Apostol. Constit. H. E. ii. 17; Apostol. Constit. xx. 57.

³ "Tam modico flexu vocis faciebat sonare lectorem Psalmi, ut pronuntiandi vicinior esset quam canenti." — August. Confess. x. 33.

⁴ Tertull. de Carn. Christi, 17.

Trinitarian doctrines. Chrysostom arrayed a band of orthodox choristers, who hymned the co-equal Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Donatists in Africa adapted their enthusiastic hymns to wild and passionate melodies, which tended to keep up and inflame, as it were, with the sound of the trumpet, the fanaticism of their followers.¹

The first change in the manner of singing was the substitution of singers,² who became a separate order in the Church, for the mingled voices of all ranks, ages, and sexes, which was compared by the great reformer of church music to the glad sound of many waters.³

The antiphonal singing, in which the different sides of the choir answered to each other in responsive verses, was first introduced at Antioch by Flavianus and Diodorus. Though, from the form of some of the psalms, it is not improbable that this system of alternate chanting may have prevailed in the Temple service, yet the place and the period of its appearance in the Christian Church seems to indicate a different source. The strong resemblance which it bears to the chorus of the Greek tragedy might induce a suspicion, that, as it borrowed its simple primitive music from Judaism, it may, in turn, have despoiled Paganism of some of its lofty religious harmonies.

This antiphonal chanting was introduced into the West⁴ by Ambrose; and if it inspired, or even fully

¹ "Donatistæ nos reprehendunt, quod sobriè psallimus in ecclesia divina cantica Prophetarum, cum ipsi ebrietates suas ad canticum psalmodiarum humano ingenio compositorum quasi tubas exhortationis inflammant." — Augustin. Confess.

² Compare Bingham. The leaders were called *ὑποβολεῖς*.

³ "Responsoriis psalmodiarum, cantu mulierum, virginum, parvularum consonans undarum fragor resultat." — Ambros., Hexam. l. iii. c. 5.

⁴ Augustin. Confess. ix. 7, 1. How, indeed, could it be rejected, when it had received the authority of a vision of the blessed Ignatius, who was said

accompanied, the *Te Deum*, usually ascribed to that prelate, we cannot calculate too highly its effect upon the Christian mind. So beautiful was the music in the Ambrosian service, that the sensitive conscience of the young Augustine took alarm, lest, when he wept at the solemn music, he should be yielding to the luxury of sweet sounds, rather than imbibing the devotional spirit of the hymn.¹ Though alive to the perilous pleasure, yet he inclined to the wisdom of awakening weaker minds to piety by this enchantment of their hearing. The Ambrosian chant, with its more simple and masculine tones, is still preserved in the Church of Milan: in the rest of Italy, it was superseded by the richer Roman chant, which was introduced by the Pope, Gregory the Great.²

to have heard the angels singing in the antiphonal manner the praises of the Holy Trinity? — Socr., *H. E.* vi. 8.

¹ “Cum reminiscor lachrymas meas quas fudi ad cantus ecclesiæ tuæ, in primordiis recuperatæ fidei meæ, et nunc ipsum cum moveor, non cantu sed rebus quæ cantantur, cum liquidâ voce et convenientissimâ modulatione cantantur: magnam instituti hujus utilitatem rursus agnosco. Ita fluctuo inter periculum voluptatis et experimentum salubritatis; magisque adducor, non quidem irretractabilem sententiam proferens cantandi consuetudinem apprecbare in ecclesiâ: ut per oblectamenta aurium, infirmior animus in affectum pietatis assurgat.” — Augustin. *Confess.* x. 33, 3. Compare ix. 7, 2.

² The cathedral chanting of England has probably almost alone preserved the ancient antiphonal system, which has been discarded for a greater variety of instruments, and a more complicated system of music, in the Roman Catholic service. This, if I may presume to offer a judgment, has lost as much in solemnity and majesty as it has gained in richness and variety. “Ce chant (le Plain Chant) tel qu’il subsiste encore aujourd’hui est un reste bien défiguré, mais bien précieux de l’ancienne musique, qui après avoir passé par la main des barbares n’a pas perdu encore toutes ses premières beautés.” — *Mil-lin, Dictionnaire des Beaux Arts.*

CHAPTER V.

Conclusion.

THUS, then, Christianity had become the religion of the Roman world: it had not, indeed, confined its adventurous spirit of moral conquest within these limits; yet it is in the Roman world that its more extensive and permanent influence, as well as its peculiar vicissitudes, can alone be followed out with distinctness and accuracy.

Paganism was slowly expiring; the hostile edicts of the emperors, down to the final legislation of Justinian, did but accelerate its inevitable destiny. Its temples, where not destroyed, were perishing by neglect and peaceful decay, or, where their solid structures defied these less violent assailants, stood deserted and overgrown with weeds; the unpaid priests ceased to offer, not only sacrifice, but prayer, and were gradually dying out as a separate order of men. Its philosophy lingered in a few cities of Greece, till the economy or the religion of the Eastern emperor finally closed its schools.

The doom of the Roman empire was likewise sealed; the horizon on all sides was dark with overwhelming clouds; and the internal energies of the empire, the military spirit, the wealth, the imperial power, had crumbled away. The external unity was dissolved; the provinces were gradually severed from the main body; the Western empire was rapidly sinking, and

the Eastern falling into hopeless decrepitude. Yet though her external polity was dissolved, though her visible throne was prostrate upon the earth, Rome still ruled the mind of man, and her secret domination maintained its influence, until it assumed a new outward form. Rome survived in her laws, in her municipal institutions, and in that which lent a new sanctity and reverence to her laws, and gave strength by their alliance with its own peculiar polity to the municipal institutions,—in her adopted religion. The empire of Christ succeeded to the empire of the Cæsars.

When it ascended the throne, assumed a supreme and universal dominion over mankind, became the legislator, not merely through public statutes, but in all the minute details of life, discharged, in fact, almost all the functions of civil as well as of religious government, Christianity could not but appear under a new form, and wear a far different appearance than when it was the humble and private faith of a few scattered individuals, or of only spiritually connected communities. As it was about to enter into its next period of conflict with barbarism, and to undergo the temptation of unlimited power, however it might depart from its primitive simplicity, and indeed recede from its genuine spirit, it is impossible not to observe how wonderfully (those who contemplate human affairs with religious minds may assert how providentially) it adapted itself to its altered position, and the new part which it was to fulfil in the history of man. We have already traced this gradual change in the formation of the powerful hierarchy, in the development of Monasticism, the establishment of the splendid and imposing ritual: we must turn our attention, before

we close, to the new modification of the religion itself.

Its theology now appears wrought out into a regular, multifarious, and, as it were, legally established system.

It was the consummate excellence of Christianity, that it blended in apparently indissoluble union religious and moral perfection. Its Christian theology of this period. essential doctrine was, in its pure theory, inseparable from humane, virtuous, and charitable disposition. Piety to God, as he was impersonated in Christ, worked out, as it seemed, by spontaneous energy, into Christian beneficence.

But there has always been a strong propensity to disturb this nice balance: the dogmatic part of religion, the province of faith, is constantly endeavoring to set itself apart, and to maintain a separate existence. Faith, in this limited sense, aspires to be religion. This, in general, takes place soon after the first outburst, the strong impulse of new and absorbing religious emotions. At a later period, morality attempts to stand alone, without the sanction or support of religious faith. One half of Christianity is thus perpetually striving to pass for the whole, and to absorb all the attention, to the neglect, to the disparagement of, at length to a total separation from, its Heaven-appointed consort. The multiplication and subtle refinement of theologic dogmas, the engrossing interest excited by some dominant tenet, especially if associated with, or embodied in, a minute and rigorous ceremonial, tend to satisfy and lull the mind into complacent acquiescence in its own religious completeness. But directly religion began to consider itself something apart, something exclusively dogmatic or

exclusively ceremonial, an acceptance of certain truths by the belief, or the discharge of certain ritual observances, then the transition from separation to hostility was rapid and unimpeded. No sooner had Christianity divorced morality as its inseparable companion through life, than it formed an unlawful connection with any dominant passion; and the strange and unnatural union of Christian faith with ambition, avarice, cruelty, fraud, and even license, appeared in strong contrast with its primitive harmony of doctrine and inward disposition. Thus in a great degree, while the Roman world became Christian in outward worship and in faith, it remained Heathen, or even at some periods worse than Heathenism in its better times, as to beneficence, gentleness, purity, social virtue, humanity, and peace. This extreme view may appear to be justified by the general survey of Christian society. Yet, in fact, religion did not, except at the darkest periods, so completely insulate itself, or so entirely recede from its natural alliance with morality; though it admitted, at each of its periods, much which was irreconcilable with its pure and original spirit. Hence the mingled character of its social and political, as well as of its personal influences. The union of Christianity with monachism, with sacerdotal domination, with the military spirit, with the spiritual autocracy of the papacy, with the advancement at one time, at another with the repression, of the human mind, had each their darker and brighter side; and were in succession (however they departed from the primal and ideal perfection of Christianity) to a certain extent beneficial, because apparently almost necessary to the social and intellectual development of mankind at

Separation
of Christian
faith and
Christian
morals

never
complete.

each particular juncture. So, for instance, military Christianity, which grew out of the inevitable incorporation of the force and energy of the barbarian conquerors with the sentiments and feelings of that age, and which finally produced chivalry, was, in fact, the substitution of inhumanity for Christian gentleness, of the love of glory for the love of peace. Yet was this indispensable to the preservation of Christianity in its contest with its new Eastern antagonist. Unwarlike Christianity would have been trampled under foot, and have been in danger of total extermination, by triumphant Mohammedanism.

Yet, even when its prevailing character thus stood in the most direct contrast with the spirit of the Gospel, it was not merely that the creed of Christianity in its primary articles was universally accepted, and a profound devotion filled the Christian mind: there was likewise a constant under-growth, as it were, of Christian feelings, and even of Christian virtues. Nothing could contrast more strangely, for instance, than St. Louis slaughtering Saracens and heretics with his remorseless sword, and the Saviour of mankind by the Lake of Galilee; yet, when this dominant spirit of the age did not pre-occupy the whole soul, the self-denial, the justice, the purity, even the gentleness, of such a man as St. Louis bore still unanswerable testimony to the genuine influence of Christianity. Our illustration has carried us far beyond the boundaries of our history; but already the great characteristic distinction of later Christian history had begun to be developed,—the severance of Christian faith from Christian love, the passionate attachment, the stern and remorseless maintenance of the Christian creed without or with

Christian
feelings
never
extinct.

only a partial practice of Christian virtue, or even the predominance of a tone of mind, in some respects absolutely inconsistent with genuine Christianity. While the human mind, in general, became more rigid in exacting, and more timid in departing from, the admitted doctrines of the Church, the moral sense became more dull and obtuse to the purer and more evanescent beauty of Christian holiness. In truth, it was so much more easy, in a dark and unreasoning age, to subscribe, or at least to render passive submission to, certain defined doctrines, than to work out those doctrines in their proper influences upon the life, that we deplore, rather than wonder at, this substitution of one half of the Christian religion for the whole. Nor are we astonished to find those, who were constantly violating the primary principles of Christianity, fiercely resenting, and, if they had the power, relentlessly avenging, any violation of the integrity of Christian faith. Heresy of opinion, we have seen, became almost the only crime against which excommunication pointed its thunders. The darker and more baleful heresy of unchristian passions, which assumed the language of Christianity, was either too general to be detected, or at best encountered with feeble and impotent remonstrance. Thus Christianity became at the same time more peremptorily dogmatic, and less influential; it assumed the supreme dominion over the mind, while it held but an imperfect and partial control over the passions and affections. The theology of the Gospel was the religion of the world; the spirit of the Gospel, very far from the ruling influence of mankind.

Yet even the theology maintained its dominion, by in some degree accommodating itself to the human

mind. It became to a certain degree *mythic* in its character, and *polytheistic* in its form.

Now had commenced what may be called, neither unreasonably nor unwarrantably, the mythic age of Christianity. As Christianity worked Mythic age of Christianity. downward into the lower classes of society, as it received the rude and ignorant barbarians within its pale, the general effect could not but be, that the age would drag down the religion to its level, rather than the religion elevate the age to its own lofty standard.

The connection between the world of man and a higher order of things had been re-established; the approximation of the Godhead to the human race, the actual presence of the Incarnate Deity upon earth, was universally recognized; transcendental truths, beyond the sphere of human reason, had become the primary and elemental principles of human belief. A strongly imaginative period was the necessary consequence of this extraordinary impulse. It was the reign of faith,—of faith which saw Faith. or felt the divine, or at least supernatural, agency, in every occurrence of life, and in every impulse of the heart; which offered itself as the fearless and undoubting interpreter of every event; which comprehended in its domain the past, the present, and the future; and seized upon the whole range of human thought and knowledge, upon history, and even natural philosophy, as its own patrimony.

This was not, it could not be, that more sublime theology of a rational and intellectual Christianity; that theology which expands itself as the system of the universe expands upon the mind; and from its wider acquaintance with the wonderful provisions, the more manifest and all-provident forethought of the Deity,

acknowledges with more awe-struck and admiring, yet not less fervent and grateful, homage the beneficence of the Creator; that Christian theology which reverentially traces the benignant providence of God over the affairs of men, — the all-ruling Father, — the Redeemer revealed at the appointed time, and publishing the code of reconciliation, holiness, peace, and everlasting life, — the Universal Spirit, with its mysterious and confessed but untraceable energy, pervading the kindred spiritual part of man. The Christian of those days lived in a supernatural world, or in a world under the constant and felt and discernible interference of supernatural power. God was not only present, but asserting his presence at every instant, not merely on signal occasions and for important purposes, but on the most insignificant acts and persons. The course of nature was beheld, not as one great uniform and majestic miracle, but as a succession of small, insulated, sometimes trivial, sometimes contradictory interpositions, often utterly inconsistent with the moral and Christian attributes of God. The divine power and goodness were not spreading abroad like a genial and equable sunlight, enlightening, cheering, vivifying, but breaking out in partial and visible flashes of influence. Each incident was a special miracle, the ordinary emotion of the heart was divine inspiration. Every individual had not merely his portion in the common diffusion of religious and moral knowledge or feeling, but looked for his peculiar and especial share in the divine blessing. His dreams came direct from heaven; a new system of Christian omens succeeded the old; witchcraft merely invoked Beelzebub or Satan instead of Hecate; hallowed places only changed their tutelary nymph or genius for a saint or martyr.

It is not less unjust to stigmatize in the mass as fraud, or to condemn as the weakness of superstition, than it is to enforce as an essential part of Christianity, that which was the necessary development of this state of the human mind. The case was this: the mind of man had before it a recent and wonderful revelation, in which it could not but acknowledge the divine interposition. God had been brought down, or had condescended to mingle himself with the affairs of men. But where should that faith, which could not but receive these high and consolatory and reasonable truths, set limits to the agency of this beneficent power? How should it discriminate between that which in its apparent discrepancy with the laws of nature (and of those laws how little was known!) was miraculous, and that which, to more accurate observation, was only strange or wonderful, or perhaps the result of ordinary but dimly seen causes?—how still more in the mysterious world of the human mind, of which the laws are still, we will not say in their primitive, but in comparison with those of external nature, in profound obscurity? If the understanding of man was too much dazzled to see clearly even material objects; if, just awakening from a deep trance, it beheld every thing floating before it in a mist of wonder,—how much more was the mind disqualified to judge of its own emotions, of the origin, suggestion, and powers of those thoughts and emotions, which still perplex and baffle our deepest metaphysics!

The irresistible current of man's thoughts and feelings ran all one way. It is difficult to calculate the effect of that extraordinary power or propensity of the mind to see what it expects to see, to color with

Imaginative
state of the
human mind

the preconceived hue of its own opinions and sentiments whatever presents itself before it. The contagion of emotions or of passions, which in vast assemblies may be resolved, perhaps, into a physical effect, acts, it should seem, in a more extensive manner; opinions and feelings appear to be propagated with a kind of epidemic force and rapidity. There were some, no doubt, who saw farther, but who either dared not, or did not care, to stand across the torrent of general feeling. But the mass, even of the strongest minded, were influenced, no doubt, by the profound religious dread of assuming that for an ordinary effect of nature, which *might be* a divine interposition. They were far more inclined to suspect reason of presumption than faith of credulity. Where faith is the height of virtue, and infidelity the depth of sin, tranquil investigation becomes criminal indifference; doubt, guilty scepticism. Of all charges, men shrink most sensitively, especially in a religious age, from that of irreligion, however made by the most ignorant or the most presumptuous. The clergy, the great agents in the maintenance and communication of this imaginative religious bias, the asserters of constant miracle in all its various forms, were themselves, no doubt, irresistibly carried away by the same tendency. It was treason against their order and their sacred duty, to arrest or to deaden whatever might tend to religious impression. Pledged by obligation, by feeling, we may add by interest, to advance religion, most were blind to, all closed their eyes against, the remote consequences of folly and superstition. A clergyman who, in a credulous or enthusiastic age, dares to be rationally pious, is a phenomenon of moral courage. From this time either the charge of irreligion,

or the not less dreadful and fatal suspicion of heresy or magic, was the penalty to be paid for the glorious privilege of superiority to the age in which the man lived, or of the attainment to a higher and more reasonable theology.

The desire of producing religious impression was, in a great degree, the fertile parent of all the wild inventions which already began to be ^{Religious impressions.} grafted on the simple creed of Christianity. That which was employed avowedly with this end in one generation, became the popular belief of the next. The full growth of all this religious poetry (for, though not in form, it was poetical in its essence) belongs to, and must be reserved for, a later period. Christian history would be incomplete without that of Christian popular superstition.

But though religion, and religion in this peculiar form, had thus swallowed up all other pursuits and sentiments, it cannot indeed be said, that this new mythic or imaginative period of the world suppressed the development of any strong intellectual energy, or arrested the progress of real knowledge and improvement. This, even if commenced, must have yielded to the devastating inroads of barbarism. But in truth, however high in some respects the civilization of the Roman empire under the Antonines; however the useful, more especially the mechanical, arts must have attained, as their gigantic remains still prove, a high perfection (though degenerate in point of taste, by the colossal solidity of their structure, the vast buildings, the roads, the aqueducts, the bridges, in every quarter of the world, bear testimony to the science as well as to the public spirit of the age), — still there is a remarkable dearth, at this flourishing period, of great

names in science and philosophy, as well as in literature.¹

Principles may have been admitted, and may have begun to take firm root, through the authoritative writings of the Christian Fathers, which, after a long period, would prove adverse to the free development of natural, moral, and intellectual philosophy; and, having been enshrined for centuries as a part of religious doctrine, would not easily surrender their claims to divine authority, or be deposed from their established supremacy. The Church condemned Galileo on the authority of the Fathers as much as of the sacred writings, at least on their irrefragable interpretation of the Scriptures; and the denial of the antipodes by St. Augustine was alleged against the magnificent, but, as it appeared to many, no less impious than frantic, theory of Columbus.² The wild cosmogonical theories of the Gnostics and Manicheans, with the no less unsatisfactory hypotheses of the Greeks, tended, no doubt, to throw discredit on all kinds of physical study,³ and to establish the strictly

¹ Galen, as a writer on physic, may be quoted as an exception.

² It has been said, that the best mathematical science which the age could command was employed in the settlement of the question about Easter, decided at the Council of Nicæa. See, on the astronomy and geography of the Fathers, Voss, *Kritische Blätter*, ii. 155, *et seq.*; also Whewell, *Hist. of Inductive Sciences*, i. 156, &c.

³ Brucker's observations on the physical knowledge, or rather on the professed contempt of physical knowledge, of the Fathers, are characterized with his usual plain good sense. Their general language was that of Lactantius: "Quanto faceret sapientius ac verius si exceptione factâ diceret causas rationesque duntaxat rerum cœlestium seu naturalium, quia sunt abditæ, nec sciri posse, quia nullus doceat, nec *quæri oportere*, quia *inveniri querendo non possunt*. Quâ exceptione interpositâ et physicos admonuisset ne quærent ea, quæ modum excederent cognitionis humanæ; et se ipsum calumniæ invidiæ liberasset, et nobis certe dedisset aliquid, quod sequeremur." — *Div. Instit.* iii. 6. See other quotations to the same effect: Brucker, *Hist. Phil.* iii. p. 357. The work of Cosmas Indicopleustes, edited by Montfaucon, is a curious example of the prevailing notions of physical science.

literal exposition of the Mosaic history of the creation. The orthodox Fathers, when they enlarge on the works of the six days, though they allow themselves largely in allegorical inference, have in general in view these strange theories, and refuse to depart from the strict letter of the history;¹ and the popular language, which was necessarily employed with regard to the earth and the movements of the heavenly bodies, became established as literal and immutable truth. The Bible, and the Bible interpreted by the Fathers, became the code, not of religion only, but of every branch of knowledge. If religion demanded the assent to a Heaven-revealed or Heaven-sanctioned theory of the physical creation, the whole history of man, from its commencement to its close, seemed to be established in still more distinct and explicit terms. Nothing was allowed for figurative or Oriental phraseology, — nothing for that condescension to the dominant sentiments and state of knowledge, which may have been necessary to render each part of the sacred writings intelligible to that age in which it was composed. And, if the origin of man was thus clearly revealed, the close of his history was still supposed, however each generation passed away undisturbed, to be imminent and immediate. The Day of Judgment was before the eyes of the Christian, either instant, or at a very brief interval; it was not unusual, on a general view, to discern the signs of the old age and decrepitude of the world; and every great calamity was either the sign or the commencement of the awful consummation. Gregory I.

¹ Compare the Hexaemeron of Ambrose, and Brucker's sensible remarks on the pardonable errors of that great prelate. The evil was, not that the Fathers fell into extraordinary errors on subjects of which they were ignorant but that their errors were canonized by the blind veneration of later ages which might have been better informed.

beheld in the horrors of the Lombard invasion the visible approach of the last day; and it is not impossible that the doctrine of a purgatorial state was strengthened by this prevalent notion, which interposed only a limited space between the death of the individual and the final judgment.¹

But the popular belief was not merely a theology in its higher sense.

Christianity began to approach to a polytheistic form, or at least to permit, what it is difficult to call by any other name than polytheistic, habits and feelings of devotion. It attributed, however vaguely, to subordinate beings some of the inalienable powers and attributes of divinity. Under the whole of this form lay the sum of Christian doctrine; but that which was constantly presented to the minds of men was the host of subordinate, indeed, but still active and influential, mediators between the Deity and the world of man. Throughout (as has already been and will presently be indicated again) existed the vital and essential difference between Christianity and Paganism. It is possible, that the controversies about the Trinity and the divine nature of Christ tended indirectly to the promotion of this worship, of the Virgin, of angels, of saints and martyrs. The great object of the victorious, to a certain extent, of both parties, was the closest approximation, in one sense, the identification, of the Saviour with the unseen and incomprehensible Deity. Though

Polytheistic
form of
Christianity.

¹ "Depopulatæ urbes, eversa castra, concrematæ ecclesiæ, destructa sunt monasteria virorum et feminarum, desolata ab hominibus prædia, atque ab omni cultore destituta; in solitudine vacat terra, occupaverunt bestię loca, quæ prius multitudo hominum tenebat. Nam in hac terrâ, in quâ nos vivimus, finem suum mundus jam non nuntiat sed ostendit." — Greg. Mag., Dial. iii. 38.

the human nature of Christ was as strenuously asserted in theory, it was not dwelt upon with the same earnestness and constancy as his divine. To magnify, to purify this from all earthly leaven was the object of all eloquence: theologic disputes on this point withdrew or diverted the attention from the life of Christ as simply related in the Gospels. Christ became the object of a remoter, a more awful, adoration. The mind began therefore to seek out, or eagerly to seize, some other more material beings, in closer alliance with human sympathies. The constant propensity of man to humanize his Deity, checked, as it were, by the receding majesty of the Saviour, readily clung with its devotion to humbler objects.¹ The weak wing of the common and unenlightened mind could not soar to the unapproachable light in which Christ dwelt with the Father: it dropped to the earth, and bowed itself down before some less mysterious and infinite object of veneration. In theory it was always a different and inferior kind of worship; but the feelings, especially impassioned devotion, know no logic; they pause not; it would chill them to death if they were to pause for these fine and subtle distinctions. The gentle ascent by which admiration, reverence, gratitude, and love, swelled up to awe, to veneration, to worship, both as regards the feelings of the individual and the general sentiment, was imperceptible. Men passed from rational respect for the

Worship of
saints and
angels.

¹ The progress of the worship of saints and angels has been fairly and impartially traced by Shröeck, *Christliche Kirchengeschichte*, viii. 161, *et seq.* In the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, it is said, "We love the martyrs as disciples and followers of the Lord." The Fathers of the next period leave the saints and martyrs in a kind of intermediate state, the bosom of Abraham or Paradise, as explained by Tertullian, *contr. Marc.* iv. 34. *Apologett.* 47. — Compare Irenæus *adv. Hær.* v. c. 31. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.* Origen, *Hom.* vii. in *Levit.*

remains of the dead,¹ the communion of holy thought and emotion, which might connect the departed saint with his brethren in the flesh, to the superstitious veneration of relics, and the deification of mortal men, by so easy a transition, that they never discovered the precise point at which they transgressed the unmarked and unwatched boundary.

This new polytheizing Christianity, therefore, was still subordinate and subsidiary in the theologic creed to the true Christian worship; but it usurped its place in the heart, and rivalled it in the daily language and practices of devotion. The worshipper felt and acknowledged his dependency, and looked for protection or support to these new intermediate beings, the intercessors with the great Intercessor. They were arrayed by the general belief in some of the attributes of the Deity, — ubiquity² and the perpetual cognizance of the affairs of earth; they could hear the prayer;³ they could read the heart; they could con-

¹ The growth of the worship of relics is best shown by the prohibitory law of Theodosius (A.D. 386) against the removal and sale of saints' bodies "Nemo martyres distrahat, nemo mercetur." — Cod. Theodos. ix. 17. Augustine denies that worship was ever offered to apostles or saints. "Quis autem audivit aliquando fidelium stantem sacerdotem ad altare etiam super sanctum corpus martyris ad Dei honorem cultumque constructum, dicere in precibus, offero tibi sacrificium, Petre, vel Paule, vel Cypriane, cum apud eorum memorias offeratur Deo qui eos et homines et martyres fecit, et sanctis suis angelis cœlesti honore sociavit." — De Civ. Dei, viii. 27. Compare xvii. 10, where he asserts miracles to be performed at their tombs.

² Massuet, in his preface to Irenæus (p. cxxxvi.), has adduced some texts from the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries on the ubiquity of the saints and the Virgin

³ Perhaps the earliest instances of these are in the eulogies of the Eastern martyrs, by Basil, Greg. Naz., and Greg. Nyssen. See especially the former on the forty Martyrs. 'Ο θλιβόμενος, ἐπὶ τοὺς τεσσαράκοντα καταφεύγει, εἰφραυνόμενος, ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἀποτρέχει, ὁ μὲν ἵνα λύσιν εὖρη τῶν δυσχερῶν, ὁ δὲ ἵνα φυλαχθῇ αὐτῷ τὰ χρηστότερα ἐνταῦθα γυνῇ εὐσεβῆς ὑπὲρ τέκνων εὐχομένη καταλαμβάνεται, ἰποδημοῦντι ἄνδρὶ τὸν ἐπάνοδον αἰτουμένη, ἄρωστον ἢ τὴν σωτηρίαν. — Oper. vol. ii. p. 155. These and similar passages

trol nature; they had a power, derivative indeed from a higher source, but still exercised, according to their volition, over all the events of the world. Thus each city, and almost each individual, began to have his tutelar saint; the presence of some beatified being hovered over and hallowed particular spots; and thus the strong influence of local and particular worships combined again with that great universal faith, of which the supreme Father was the sole object, and the Universe the temple.¹ Still, however, this new poly-

in Greg. Nazianzen (*Orat. in Basil*) and Gregory of Nyssa (in *Theodor. Martyr.*), may be rhetorical ornaments; but their ignorant and enthusiastic hearers would not make much allowance for the fervor of eloquence. Compare *Prudent. in Hippolytum Martyrem*. See also *Van Dale*, p. 230.

¹ An illustration of the new form assumed by Christian worship may be collected from the works of Paulinus, who, in eighteen poems, celebrates the nativity of St. Felix, the tutelary saint of Nola. St. Felix is at least invested in the powers ascribed to the intermediate deities of antiquity. Pilgrims crowded from the whole of the south of Italy to the festival of St. Felix. Rome herself, though she possessed the altars of St. Peter and St. Paul, poured forth her myriads; the Capenian gate was choked, the Appian way was covered with the devout worshippers.² Multitudes came from beyond the sea. St. Felix is implored by his servants to remove the impediments to their pilgrimages from the hostility of men or adverse weather; to smooth the seas, and send propitious winds.³ There is constant reference, indeed, to

² *Stipatam multis unam juvat urbibus urbem
Cernere, totque uno compulsæ examina voto.
Lucani coeunt populi, colit Appula pubes;
Et Calabri, et cuncti, quos adluit æstus uterque,
Qui læva, et dextra Latium circumsonat unda.*

*Et qua bis ternas Campania læta per urbes, &c.
Ipsaque coelestium sacris procerum monumentis
Roma Petro Pauloque potens, rarescere gaudet
Hujus honore diel, portæque ex ore Capenæ
Millia profundens ad amicæ mœnia Nolæ
Dimittit duodena decem per millia denso
Agmine, confertis longe latet Appia turbis. — Carm. III.*

³ *Da currere mollibus undis,
Et famulis famulos a puppi suggere ventos. — Carm. I.*

theism differed in its influence, as well as in its nature, from that of Paganism. It bore a constant reference

Christ,¹ as the source of this power; yet the power is fully and explicitly assigned to the saint. He is the prevailing intercessor between the worshipper and Christ. But the vital distinction between this Paganizing form of Christianity and Paganism itself is no less manifest in these poems. It is not merely as a tutelary deity in this life, that the saint is invoked: the future state of existence and the final judgment are constantly present to the thoughts of the worshipper. St. Felix is entreated after death to bear the souls of his worshippers into the bosom of the Redeemer, and to intercede for them at the last day.²

These poems furnish altogether a curious picture of the times, and show how early Christian Italy began to become what it is. The pilgrims brought their votive offerings, curtains, and hangings, embroidered with figures of animals, silver plates, with inscriptions, candles of painted wax, pendent lamps, precious ointments, and dishes of venison and other meats for the banquet. The following characteristic circumstance must not be omitted. The magnificent plans of Paulinus for building the church of St. Felix were interfered with by two wooden cottages, which stood in a field before the front of the building. At midnight a fire broke out in these tenements. The affrighted bishop woke up in trembling apprehension lest the splendid "palace" of the saint should be enveloped in the flames. He entered the church, armed with a piece of the wood of the true cross, and advanced towards the fire. The flames, which had resisted all the water thrown upon them, retreated before the sacred wood; and in the morning every thing was found uninjured except these two devoted buildings. The bishop, without scruple, ascribes the fire to St. Felix:—

Sed et hoc Felicis gratia nobis
Munere consulit, quod præveniendi laborem
Utilibus flammis, operum compendia nobis
Præstitit. — Carm. x. •

The peasant, who had dared to prefer his hovel, though the beloved dwelling of his youth, to the house of God or of his saint, seeing one of the buildings thus miraculously in flames, sets fire to the other.

Et celeri peragit sua damna furore
Dilectasque domos, et inanes plangit amores.

Some of the other miracles at the shrine of St. Felix border close on the comic.

¹ Sis bonus o felixque tuis, Dominumque potentem
Exores, . . .

Liceat placati munere Christi

Post pelagi fluctus, &c.

² Positasque tuorum

Ante tuos vultus, animas vectare paterno

Ne renuas gremio Domini fulgentis ad ora. . . .

Posce ovium grege nos statui, ut sententia summi

Judicis, hoc quoque nos iterum tibi munere donet. — Carm. III.

to another state of existence. Though the office of the tutelary being was to avert and mitigate temporal suffering, yet it was still more so to awaken and keep alive the sentiments of the religious being. They were not merely the agents of the divine providential government on earth, but indissolubly connected with the hopes and fears of the future state of existence.

The most natural, most beautiful, and most universal, though perhaps the latest developed, of these new forms of Christianity, — that ^{Worship of the Virgin.} which tended to the poetry of the religion, and acted as the conservator of art, particularly of painting, till at length it became the parent of that refined sense of the beautiful, that which was the inspiration of modern Italy, — was the worship of the Virgin. Directly that Christian devotion expanded itself beyond its legitimate objects; as soon as prayers or hymns were addressed to any of those beings who had acquired sanctity from their connection or co-operation with the introduction of Christianity into the world; as soon as the apostles and martyrs had become hallowed in the general sentiment, as more especially the objects of the divine favor and of human gratitude, — the Virgin mother of the Saviour appeared to possess peculiar claims to the veneration of the Christian world. The worship of the Virgin, like most of the other tenets which grew out of Christianity, originated in the lively fancy and fervent temperament of the East, but was embraced with equal ardor, and retained with passionate constancy, in the West.¹

¹ Irenæus, in whose works are found the earliest of those ardent expressions with regard to the Virgin, which afterwards kindled into adoration, may, in this respect, be considered as Oriental. I allude to his parallel between Eve and the Virgin, in which he seems to assign a mediatorial character to the latter. — Iren. iii. 33, v. 19.

The earlier Fathers use expressions with regard to the Virgin altogether

The higher importance assigned to the female sex by Christianity, than by any other form at least of Oriental religion, powerfully tended to the general adoption of the worship of the Virgin while that worship re-acted on the general estimation of the female sex. Women willingly deified (we cannot use another adequate expression) this perfect representative of their own sex, while the sex was elevated in general sentiment by the influence ascribed to their all-powerful patroness. The ideal of this sacred being was the blending of maternal tenderness with perfect purity,—the two attributes of the female character which man, by his nature, seems to hold in the highest admiration and love; and this image constantly presented to the Christian mind, calling forth the gentler emotions, appealing to, and giving, as it were, the divine sanction to, domestic affections, could not be without its influence. It operated equally on the manners, the feelings, and in some respect on the inventive powers of Christianity. The gentleness of the Redeemer's character, the impersonation of the divine mercy in his whole beneficent life, had been in some degree darkened by the fierceness of polemic animosity. The religion had assumed a sternness and severity arising from the mutual and recriminatory inconsistent with the reverence of later ages. Tertullian compares her unfavorably with Martha and Mary, and insinuates that she partook of the incredulity of the rest of her own family. "*Mater æquè non demonstratur adhæsisse illi, cum Marthæ et Mariæ aliæ in commercia ejus frequententur. Hoc denique in loco (St. Luc. viii. 20) apparet incredulitas eorum cum is doceret viam vitæ,*" &c.—*De Carne Christi*, c. 7. There is a collection of quotations on this subject in Field on the Church, p. 264, *et seqq.* See this subject pursued in Latin Christianity.

The Collyridians, who offered cakes to the Virgin, were rejected as heretics.—*Epiph., Hær. lxxviii., lxxix.*

The perpetual virginity of Mary was an object of controversy: as might be expected, it was maintained with unshaken confidence by Epiphanius Ambrose, and Jerome.

condemnations. The opposite parties denounced eternal punishments against each other with such indiscriminate energy, that hell had become almost the leading and predominant image in the Christian dispensation. This advancing gloom was perpetually softened; this severity allayed by the impulse of gentleness and purity, suggested by this new form of worship. It kept in motion the genial undercurrent of more humane feeling; it diverted and estranged the thought from this harassing strife to calmer and less exciting objects. The dismal and the terrible, which so constantly haunted the imagination, found no place during the contemplation of the Mother and the Child, which, when once it became enshrined in the heart, began to take a visible and external form.¹ The image arose out of, and derived its sanctity from, the general feeling, which in its turn, especially when, at a later period, real art breathed life into it, strengthened the general feeling to an incalculable degree.

The wider and more general dissemination of the worship of the Virgin belongs to a later period in Christian history.

Thus, under her new form, was Christianity prepared to enter into the darkening period of European history,—to fulfil her high office as the great con-

¹ At a later period, indeed, even the Virgin became the goddess of war.

Ἄελ γὰρ οἶδε τὴν φύσιν νικᾶν μόνη,
Τόκῳ τὸ πρῶτον, καὶ μάχῃ τὸ δεύτερον.

Such are the verses of George of Pisidia, relating a victory over the Avars. On the whole subject of this Conclusion, I would venture to refer to the *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, especially to the chapters on Iconoclasm, and those in the *Survey*, relating to the Popular Worship, the Literature, and the Fine Arts of Christianity.

servative principle of religion, knowledge, humanity, and of the highest degree of civilization of which the age was capable, during centuries of violence, of ignorance, and of barbarism.

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